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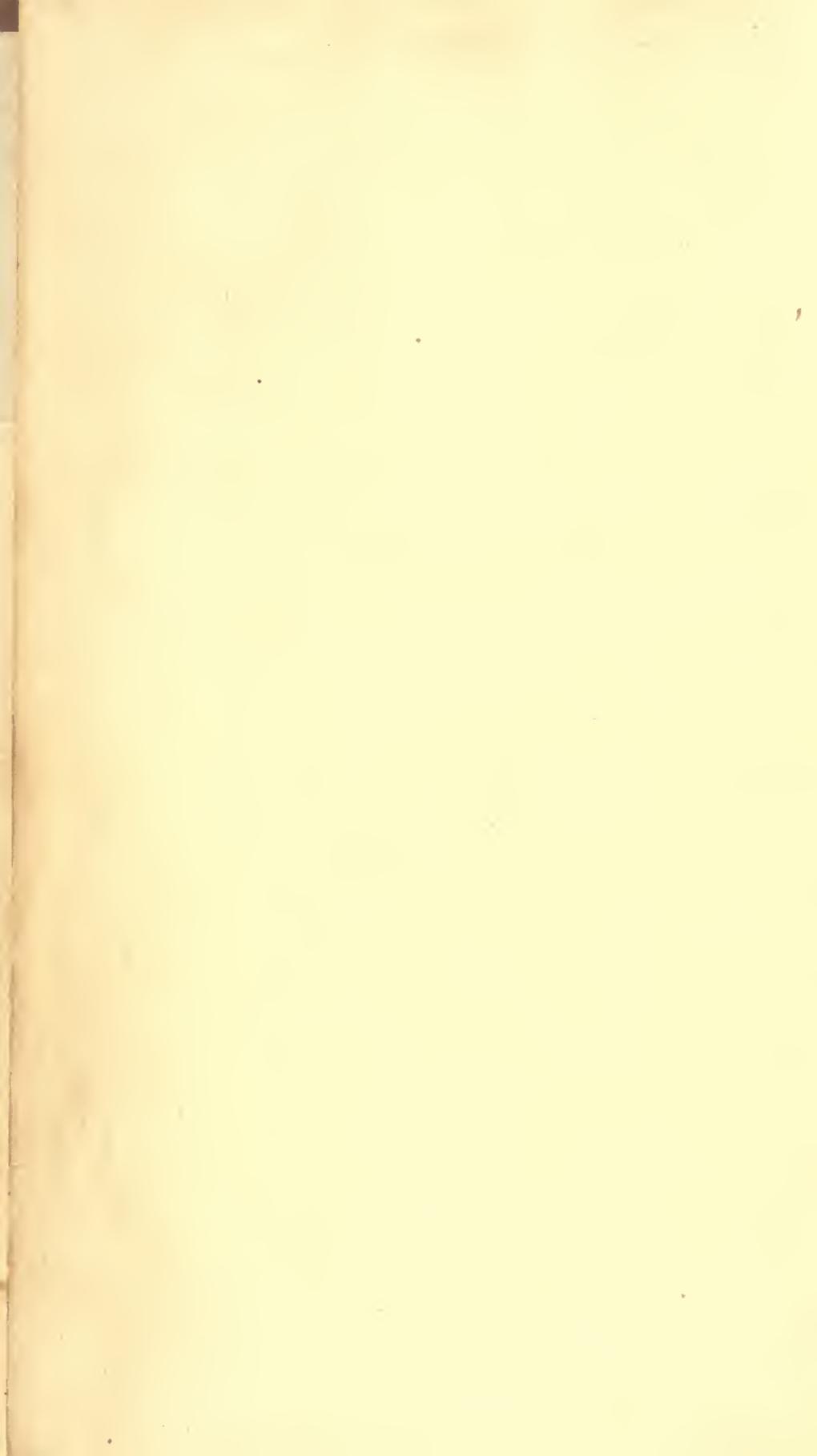
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MEDITATIONS

ON THE

HOLY EUCHARIST.

BY

BROTHER PHILIPPE,

SUPERIOR-GENERAL OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

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Translated from the French  
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Come and

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INTRODUCTION.

"COME and behold ye the works of the Lord," said the royal prophet; "the God of Jacob is our protector. . . . With the joy of the whole earth is Mount Sion founded, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. . . . We have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple."*

Now, who does not perceive that these words have an admirable reference to the Holy Eucharist which is the greatest of the works of the Lord, and by which the God of Israel resides in person in our midst to defend us against our enemies and make us experience every day in his holy temple the most signal effects of his mercy?

It is, then, this divine sacrament which the Holy Ghost invites us to contemplate with all the attention of which we are capable. Let us understand this, and make it our happiness to meditate on that miracle which, according to the sentiment of St. Augustine, exhausts, if we may use the expression, the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God.

* Ps., xlv. 8, 12; xlviv. 7, 10.

Moreover, what can be more just and more fitting ! The Word made flesh, the Son of promise, the Desired of nations, wishes through love of us to remain with his Church, to make himself our companion, our friend, our guide, our victim, our food, even to the consummation of the world ! Ah ! how then could we be indifferent to his presence ? How could we help devoting our minds to the contemplation of the adorable Emmanuel under the veil with which he conceals himself ? How could we but reflect on the love he testifies for us in his sacrament, on the work he performs there, on the lessons he gives us there, on what he requires of us and on the means to be adopted to have a share in the graces that flow so abundantly from the holy altar ?

The most high God, whose throne is borne by the cherubim, dwells with us in the same city, and perhaps under the same roof ; and we for whom he has so greatly humbled himself, scarcely think of him, scarcely cast a more attentive glance towards him, than on any other object that might be in his sanctuary ! Is not this failing in the sovereign respect that is his due ?

It is our duty, then, to make the Holy Eucharist the subject of our meditations : nothing is more according to order, while nothing is more consoling or more profitable.

The supreme happiness of man consists in the vision

of God, in the most entire union with that sovereign good who alone can satisfy the cravings of our intellect, our heart, and will; and what does the soul that meditates with a lively faith and an ardent charity on the adorable Eucharist, but contemplate in the highest degree possible to it upon earth the infinitely amiable God, who, showing himself to her “full of grace and truth,”* suffers her to have a glimpse of some rays of his glory? What does she but unite herself to him in her thoughts and affections, and prepare herself for the perfect and eternal union with that heavenly spouse? This exercise, therefore, contains for her a source of true spiritual consolations—a river of joy.

If it is delightful to contemplate the magnificent works of creation, can it be otherwise to contemplate with the eyes of the soul the Creator himself! And, moreover, is not the Holy Eucharist the sublime abridgment of all the works of the right hand of the Most High? Is it not in a special manner the memorial of all that our divine Redeemer has done for our salvation? In meditating on this august sacrament, we recall to mind the mysteries of our Savior’s life; we contemplate the divine Infant in the crib at Bethlehem, as did Mary and Joseph, the Shepherds and the Magi; we adore him in the temple of Jerusalem, like the holy

* St. John, i. 14.

old man Simeon, or the prophetess Anna; we follow our divine Master into the cities and towns of Judea and Galilee like the crowd which, witnesses of his miracles and transported with hearing his discourses, proclaimed him the Messiah sent from God; we ascend with him the hill of sacrifice, and, with Mary and St. John, we remain at the foot of the cross on which he completes the work of the redemption of the world; we see him at last risen from the grave, and ascending towards heaven bearing with him the trophies of his victory over the world and hell.

We contemplate him continuing in his Eucharistic life the mission of his mortal life, healing souls, casting out devils, consoling the afflicted, feeding his people with miraculous, or rather, with divine bread; we contemplate him evangelizing the poor, teaching every virtue, suffering and dying mystically to elevate humanity, to heal its wounds, to place it again on the path of justice and happiness, and make it accomplish its glorious destiny.

Are not all these thoughts of a nature calculated to settle our minds in a sweet and salutary repose? How many others there are which tend to the same end! Nothing can satisfy us as much as the conviction of being loved by those whom we love: now, every one that meditates on the Holy Eucharist gains the conviction always

strengthening more and more, that he is beloved by the sovereign King himself, and he repeats like St. Paul, while tears of gratitude and happiness flow from his eyes: “The Son of God loved me and delivered Himself for me.”*

Meditation on the Holy Eucharist is also an abundant source of the graces of light, unction, purity, strength, and zeal, those most calculated to preserve us from evil, and make us advance in the path that leads to life. By the divine light which the Lamb, who is the sun of the new Jerusalem, sheds from the sanctuary, the faithful soul sees the things of earth in their true colors: the vanities, the riches, the pleasures of the world appear to it only as so much dirt, or rather as a mortal poison; while, on the other hand, virtue appears to her full of attractions, and the only good worthy of our ambition. While contemplating her divine Master in the tabernacle, or when he comes to her in Holy Communion, she hears him repeat those sublime lessons contained in his holy Gospel: “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God: if any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me: what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? He who is the greatest among you, let him be as the least. Thou art careful and

* Gal., ii. 20.

troubled about many things; but one thing is necessary.” *

The soul understands this holy doctrine, and makes it the rule of her conduct. Therefore, not only does she “love not the world nor the things which are in the world, † but she directs all her affections towards the heavenly spouse who has alone every right to our love, and she has no ambition but to imitate his humiliations, and keep herself unsullied in his sight.

Imitating his example, and with the assistance of his grace, she loves her neighbor with a disinterested, constant, universal, and generous love, resting on faith and which leads her to sacrifice herself for the good of her brethren. Is it not, in fact, from the altar that the heroism of Christian charity comes, as from its true source? Is it not while meditating on the self-sacrifice of Jesus as our victim, that the faithful soul feels herself most strongly inspired to sacrifice every thing for those whom he has made his representatives in our regard?

The Holy Eucharist is the first and the most excellent of the means through which the graces of God are communicated to us, and the soul that meditates on that divine sacrament disposes herself thereby for participating abundantly in the treasures it contains.

* St. Matt., v. 8; xvi. 24: St. Luke, xxii. 26; x. 41, 42.

† 1 St. John, ii. 15.

With what piety does the faithful soul assist at the holy Sacrifice, penetrated with the thought that it is the sacrifice of Calvary continued and renewed with the same merit! How great is her love for holy communion, into whose sublimity and unappreciable advantages her lively faith gives her an insight! How carefully she prepares herself for it, and afterwards with what attention and vigilance she preserves the fruits of holiness derived from it!

How constant she is in her visits to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and with what fervor she adores him there in union with the holy angels around his altar! How frequent are her spiritual communions which are always so profitable to her! How great also is her zeal to excite, reanimate, and propagate devotion to the Holy Eucharist; to make this gift of God known and esteemed, and to lead the hearts, over which she can have any influence, to the adorable Emmanuel!

It is evident, then, that nothing could be more useful to us, especially, who are religious and teachers, than to meditate on the divine Sacrament of the altar in which we participate so frequently, and that we ought above all to make it known and appreciated by our pupils. Now, it is with a view of facilitating this holy exercise that we publish this work in which we have gathered together, under the ordinary form of our subjects of

meditation, the thoughts which have appeared to us most calculated to penetrate our minds with the dignity of the divine Sacrament, and to dispose us for assisting at holy mass and holy communion.

This is the end that we have proposed to ourselves above everything, persuaded that it is always of the greatest importance to make a serious preparation before participating in the divine banquet.

The book of *Meditations* on the Holy Eucharist will serve ordinarily for mental prayer on Thursday morning. On the days of regular communion, we should select the subjects which have reference to the Holy Eucharist in general, or to holy Communion ; in the opposite case we might choose those which treat of holy Mass, spiritual Communion, visits to the holy Sacrament, and Benediction, &c.

With the *Meditations* on the Holy Eucharist we publish some on the sacred heart of Jesus, to be read on the feast of the Sacred Heart, the first Friday of each month, and when it is suitable on other days, for instance, on those on which the devotions of the Forty Hours take place. Both these classes of meditations tend principally to make us attentive to the love of Jesus Christ for us, and to excite in our hearts love and gratitude towards him.

“Love is not loved,” cried out St. Mary Magdalene

of Pazzi. But is it not because love is not known? Let us, then, study to know him and make him known, and as a natural consequence we shall love him and cause him to be loved. Now, what is more advantageous towards this end than to meditate on the Holy Eucharist and the Sacred Heart? For who can contemplate either of those objects, under any point of view, without understanding better the love of Jesus Christ for men, and without feeling inspired to return that divine Savior, as much as possible, love for love, and sacrifice for sacrifice?

We have, therefore, reason to hope that this work will from its very nature contribute to the glory of our Lord, and the sanctification of souls. May the glorious Virgin Mary, under whose auspices we have composed it and to whom we now consecrate it, deign to obtain by her all-powerful intercession the realization of this end, which is all we ask for on this side of the grave; and may it count for something in the scales of divine mercy, on the day when it shall please her divine Son to call us to himself.

BROTHER PHILIPPE.

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MEDITATIONS ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

FIRST MEDITATION.

CIRCUMSTANCES ACCOMPANYING THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“Jesus having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”—St. John, xiii. 1.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS has loved us with unspeakable love. He has loved us to excess: everything proclaims it, but above all, the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

More than once, in the course of his preaching, that divine Savior had announced that he would give himself to man to be their nourishment. Speaking to the Jews at Capharnaum: “I am the bread of life. . . . Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and they died . . . I am the living bread which came down

from heaven ; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life . . . for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.”*

Such was the divine promise that he was afterwards to realize, under circumstances most calculated to awaken every tender emotion in our hearts.

Jesus Christ institutes the Holy Eucharist at the end of his public life, because that Sacrament is the memorial and abridgment of all his works. In establishing it, he fulfilled these words of the royal prophet : “ He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord ; he hath given food to them that fear him.”† That divine Master, having lived upon earth going about doing good, wished, when about to leave it, to do a good excelling all the others, to accomplish a work that was to be the crown of all his works, to work a miracle that should complete his whole life of miracles.

Jesus Christ institutes the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, thus showing us that he is the Lamb offered in sacrifice, whose sacred flesh is our food ; that his sacrament is the nourishment of Christians, the Paschal Lamb of the new people of God. He institutes it at the last supper : there was no need to offer up the figurative lamb, since on the morrow he was to offer himself up in sacrifice on Calvary, and till the end of time on our altars,—he, the true Lamb, who alone taketh away the sins of the world. The ancient Passover was to give place

* St. John, vi. 35–56.

† Ps., cx. 4, 5.

to the new, the Jewish law to the Christian dispensation, figures to reality, and the Mosaic sacrifices to the sacrifice of our altars. Therefore the Church thus sings in the Office of the Holy Sacrament: "The Pash of the new law puts an end to the ancient Passover; the new rite abolishes its predecessor, the shadow fades before the truth, the light scatters the darkness of night.* The heavenly bread puts an end to ancient figures."†

Jesus Christ institutes the Holy Eucharist on the very night he was to be betrayed, and at the hour when his enemies were making ready to seize him. Before delivering himself into their hands to be crucified, he prepares for all men the repast by which they were to live his life; he establishes the sacrifice which, being intended to represent and continue that he is about to fulfil on Calvary, will remain the only true sacrifice. "While at the house of Caiphas," says St. Leo, "and while they are discussing the means of putting him to death, this loving Savior, by establishing the sacrament of his body and his blood, teaches how great is the victim that was afterwards to be offered up to God."

O prodigy of his love for us! It is at the very moment that they are preparing the instruments of his Passion that he gives the greatest proof of his goodness and munificence. Thus, O generous Savior, you reserved the most signal of your favors for that hour when you were to receive the most cruel outrages! When there are no further limits for the ingratitude and malice of

* From the *Lauda Sion.*

† Hymn *Sacris solemniiis.*

men to cross, your love goes beyond the limits it had laid out for itself, and favors us with the most excellent of your gifts. Soon will the scourges inflicted at the pillar, and the nails fastening you to the cross, drain your blood ; but you first fill with it the chalice you present to us in the persons of your disciples, to whom you say : “Drink ye all of this ; for this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins.”* Ah ! how can we think on this prodigy of your goodness without shedding tears of love, admiration, and gratitude ?

Jesus Christ institutes the Holy Eucharist on the evening preceding his death, because he wishes that sacrament to perpetuate and renew its memory ; he wishes that the victim of the altar should make us think on the victim of Calvary ; that while feeding us with his body and blood, we should at the same time feed our minds with the memory of his Passion ; that we should recall at the same time the testament he made in our favor, and his death, which is its confirmation.

The day is come when he is to leave us to return to his Father. Still his heart refuses to be separated from us in whom he takes delight, and he is unwilling to leave us orphans. What does he then do ? His love suggests and his omnipotence executes : he establishes the holy Eucharist, and by that means, while leaving the world to go to his Father, he will nevertheless remain truly in the world, beneath the sacramental veils.

Man, at the approach of death, feels his tenderness

* St. Matt., xxvi. 28.

redoubled for those that are dear to him, and bequeathes what he holds most precious, saying to them : "Remember me." Thus does Jesus Christ act in an ineffable manner at the moment when his Passion is about to begin. When about to leave us, he bequeathes to us the richest, the greatest, the most sublime gift possible ; that is to say, he gives us *himself*, saying : " Remember me." He appoints us his heirs, and the inheritance he leaves us comprises all his treasures ; it is his body and blood, his soul and divinity ; it is his own adorable person, and with it his infinite merits.

Oh, how excellent is the portion that has fallen to us ! What grounds we have to celebrate the tenderness and generosity of him from whom it comes to us !

Yes, O divine Savior, you are worthy of all praise, of all glory on earth and heaven. Yes, everything in your adorable Sacrament proclaims your goodness, your boundless clemency ; everything therein repeats to us these words of your beloved disciple : " Jesus having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end."

APPLICATION.

Jesus has loved us,—do we love him ? . . . He has loved us without measure,—do we love him in return with all our hearts ? . . . Through love he gives us all he possesses,—do we through love and gratitude give ourselves wholly to him ? . . . Alas ! perhaps we remain cold, insensible towards him !

Let it not be so in future. When the heart of Jesus

is all fire towards us, could ours remain all ice to him ? Let us enter on the path of divine love and persevere in it. Let love be the source of our actions, the object of our resolutions, the end of our wishes. . . .

Let us thus testify to the God of goodness who gives himself to us the most lively gratitude, and let us devote ourselves to him without reserve.

We ought to do so, we religious above all, who participate so frequently at the sacred banquet. Ah ! let us show that we appreciate the favor we enjoy, and that we cherish the memory of it in our hearts.

Let us correspond to the designs of Jesus Christ in this regard. For this purpose, let us be zealous in making him known, loved, and praised by the souls entrusted to us, and in attaching them to his service ; let us do his will faithfully ; let us constantly seek to please him, and let us make it our study to form ourselves to his likeness.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, generous Savior ! who, on the night of the Last Supper, gave thyself to thy disciples with thy own hands under the sacramental veils, grant that I may appreciate the greatness of that favor, and may render thee worthy thanks for it. Oh ! grant, I beseech thee ; that, feeding myself with devotion, with the bread of life which thou gavest me in this land of exile, I may be admitted to feed myself still more with it in heaven, in union with the saints and angels. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 328.)

SECOND MEDITATION.

ON WHAT PRECEDED THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“Go and prepare us the Pasch.”—St. Luke, xxii. 8.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS CHRIST, knowing that his hour was come to pass from this world to his Father, wishes in his ineffable love to favor us with the most excellent of his gifts—to institute the divine sacrament, by which, while ascending into heaven to receive there the homage of adoration of the saints and angels, and to prepare a place for us *there*, he will nevertheless remain with the children of Adam, to be till the end of time our companion, our food, and our victim.

Let us contemplate him preparing to give us this pledge of his infinite love. He calls to him two of his disciples,—Peter, the prince of the apostles, he who manifested the most lively faith and the most steadfast attachment; and John, the apostle of love, the virgin disciple. “And he said to them: Behold, as you go into the city, there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water: follow him into the house which he entereth into; and you shall say to the master of the house, ‘The Master saith to thee, Where is the guest-

chamber where I may eat the Pasch with my disciples ?' And he will show you a large dining-room, furnished, and there prepare."*

The apostles Peter and John do what is commanded them, and soon all is ready in the guest-chamber for the Pasch. In the evening, Jesus comes thither himself, with the other apostles, and by his presence sanctifies that holy apartment, that temple of the new law, that place forever memorable, where the most astonishing of miracles was to be wrought, where already the table was placed for the first Communion that was to be made in the Church, from which the Eucharistic stream was to take its source, to spread hence throughout the world, scattering and maintaining an abundance of supernatural blessings.

Jesus seats himself at table with the twelve for the paschal supper. Thus it is, in a family and festive banquet, that he prepared to institute the sacrament of his love. He wished to teach us that the adorable Eucharist is the spiritual banquet of the great Christian family, a sacred banquet of union and concord, a source of pure joy, and the image of the everlasting banquet, of which he speaks on that very day, saying to his apostles: "And I appoint to you, as my Father hath appointed to me, a kingdom; that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and may sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."†

The divine Master begins the paschal feast which was to precede the Eucharistic feast. With his

* St. Luke, xxii. 10-12.

† St. Luke, xxii. 29, 30.

apostles, he eats of the flesh of the last figurative lamb, for henceforth it is he himself, the Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world, who will be immolated to the glory of his Father, and who, under the appearance of bread and wine, is about to offer himself in the same chamber, on the same table, to the same guests, thus inaugurating a sacrifice which shall have no end, and which alone shall be agreeable to the Lord.

The new paschal is about to succeed to the old. The former took place only once a year; the latter will be celebrated without ceasing, and through it the whole life of Christians will be one banquet, prefiguring the eternal banquet in which they will be one day called to participate.

Jesus knew what a source of joy the sacrament of his body and blood would be to us, and therefore his heart, inflamed with love, sighs so ardently for the moment when he was to institute it: "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer; for I say to you that from this time I will not eat it, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."*

O sublime words! what love and what generosity they manifest! This then, O divine Savior, your greatest desire is to put an end to symbolical worship, to the law of fear, and to substitute in its place true worship and the law of love: after having celebrated the Mosaic Pasch it is your greatest desire to establish the Christian Pasch in which all men might participate. In your infinite charity you wish to be Eucharistic victim,

* St. Luke, xxii. 15, 16.

and afterwards the victim of expiation, to give yourself to us as the food of our souls, and immediately after, to suffer and die for us ; to place yourself on the Eucharistic table and thence to go to the altar of the cross to shed there your blood and die for our salvation.

Ah ! how can we think of your designs of mercy without loving you with our whole hearts and devoting ourselves to you without reserve.

But before instituting the Holy Eucharist, Jesus Christ teaches us by his example and words the dispositions we should have before approaching to his sacred banquet. He rises from table, "and having taken a towel, he girded himself; after that, he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."*

Oh ! like them, and particularly like St. Peter, let us be filled with the greatest astonishment. Christ, the Son of God, humbled himself; the Lord of lords appeared under the form of a servant. He whom the angels adore humbles himself even at the feet of Judas.

Who, then, will henceforth suffer himself to fall into pride and self-esteem ? How can we fail to understand that to please Jesus Christ, and put ourselves in a condition to profit by his coming into our hearts, we must embrace the practice of the most profound humility, love humiliation, seek to render to our brothers the most humble services, and act agreeably to these words, then addressed to his apostles : "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also."†

* St. John, xiii. 4, 5.

† *Ibid.*, 15.

By washing their feet before giving them his body and blood, Jesus Christ teaches us with what purity of soul we should approach to his holy table—a purity of which he is the source and which he alone can give—which, ordinarily speaking, he communicates to us through the sacrament of penance; or, when they are only venial sins, through other means by which we may obtain forgiveness. But this purity we should ask of him and strive to acquire by doing all that is possible on our part.

APPLICATION.

Let us respect our Churches, where all the wonders performed at the last supper are wrought; where the holy table is continually furnished; where the bread of angels, the food for eternal life, is given us; where the divine lamb remains day and night offering himself as a victim for us.

Let us long, with the greatest desire, to eat the Pasch which Jesus Christ has prepared for us; let us sigh unceasingly for the happy moment when that great favor will be accorded to us, by which our soul becomes a new tabernacle, since the God whom it receives, instructs, purifies, nourishes it, and communicates to it a relish for prayer and retirement, giving to it his Holy Spirit.

Let us bring to the holy table purity of conscience; for, as St. Ambrose says, or rather the Church herself: “No one should participate of this heavenly Sacrament who has not preserved the seal of grace, or recovered it

when lost." Let us sincerely detest our faults, even the least, remembering, as St. Leguori teaches, that affection for venial sin deprives us of a portion of the fruits of this sacrament.

Let us approach this divine banquet with the other requisite dispositions, particularly charity, piety, and humility ; let us go to Jesus with St. Peter's lively faith, and St. John's ardent charity ; let us go to him with a sense of our own unworthiness, with hearts free from self-love, anxious only to humble ourselves before God and men.

Oh ! how profitable communion with them proves to us ! What graces we shall receive at the table of the Lord, and what progress we shall consequently make in the path of sanctity, whose end is the heaven of heavens, the abode of happiness without end.

PRAYER.

I wish, O Jesus ! most holy Savior, to receive thee with profit to my soul, and, alas ! my heart is defiled with numberless faults : ah ! remember that thou alone canst purify what is impure.

Thou didst wash the feet of thy apostles before feeding them with thy body and blood ; wash me also, I beseech thee, by thy grace ; purify my soul, remove from it even the slightest defilement of sin, so that eating worthily of the new Pasch, I may by thy mercy be able to see its accomplishment in the kingdom of God.

(See RÈSUMÈS, page 328.)

THIRD MEDITATION.

INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“This is my body this is my blood.”—St. Matt.,
xxvi. 26, 28.

CONSIDERATION.

“WHEN about to leave this world to go to his Father,” says the holy Council of Trent, “our Savior institutes the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist in which he pours forth profusely the riches of his divine love, comprising therein the remembrance of all his wonders.” Ah! let us contemplate him working this prodigy of his omnipotence and of his unspeakable love.

After having washed his apostles' feet, he returns to the table and commands them to do to each other as he had done to them. His thoughts then rest on him among their number, who, a slave to Satan, was in a few hours to deliver him up to the Jews! He shows that he knows of his wicked project, and even solicits that wretch but in vain to reflect and pause on the path of perdition on which he had entered.

Then, as if to give some solace to his heart, he allows St. John to lay his head upon his breast. . . . O beloved disciple, who can express your happiness? What passes in your soul at that moment when, if we may say so, you make but one with your divine Master, when you

hear the beatings of his adorable heart, and your's is in closest communication with that furnace of divine love ?

But the hour has come when all the faithful may participate in the same favor as St. John. Yes, all are invited to the table of the Lord and admitted to the most intimate union with him. Jesus Christ shows this by choosing as the remote matter of the Sacrament of his body and blood, bread and wine, the most universal nourishment whose use is most familiar and most general. By that choice, he teaches us that he wishes the adorable Eucharist to be the habitual food of Christians.

That adorable Savior takes bread unto his holy and venerable hands, and having raised his eyes to heaven, to God his Father, he returns thanks: teaching us thereby that he is about to establish the true sacrifice of thanksgiving, that by which alone the Father can be worthily thanked for all his favors to us.

After having blessed the bread, Jesus Christ breaks it and gives it to his disciples, saying to them : "Take and eat ye all of this, for this is my body which shall be delivered up for you and for many for the remission of sins. Do this for a commemoration of me."*

Then he takes in the same manner the cup, which he blesses, after having returned thanks, and gives to his disciples, saying to them : "Take and drink ye all of this : for this is my blood which shall be shed for the remission of sins. Do this for a commemoration of me. every time that you will drink thereof."†

* Liturgy.

† *Ibid.*

It is thus that he works that miracle of his love for men. His word was a creative word, the excellence of which nothing can make us comprehend, being superior to the words spoken on the first day: "In the beginning God said: be light made, and light was made.* But here what is produced is the very Author of light; the words in some sense create the Creator himself.

When he said: "This is my body," Jesus changed all the substance of the bread he held in his hands into the substance of his body,—that same body which, born of the Virgin Mary, was to be delivered up to death for us. When he said: "This is my blood," he changed in the same manner all the wine which was in the chalice into his blood,—that same blood which he was to shed for the remission of sins.

Behold how he gave himself to his apostles to be their spiritual food, and the life of their souls. Now, as it was not for them alone that he instituted the Holy Eucharist, but for the whole human race, he appointed them priests of the new law, and commanded them to do what he had done for a commemoration of him. Thus all the faithful of all times may participate in this divine banquet, and feed on the living bread come down from heaven.

But in the thoughts of the adorable Master who established this sacrament, did they not already participate in it? In his eyes "a thousand years are as one day;" † all generations of Christians were then present to his mind, and according to the expression of the Holy

* Gen., 1-3.

† Ps., lxxxix. 4.

Scriptures he saw all the Children of the Church "as olive plants round about his table."* He saw us there, we, who this day meditate on the prodigy he then wrought and which is unceasingly renewed on our altars. Consequently, it is to us also he said: "Take ye and eat: this is my body;—take ye and drink: this is my blood."

Jesus, a priest according to the order of Melchisedech, and at the same time the victim of salvation, offers to his Father in sacrifice his body and blood under the species of bread and wine, while waiting to offer him on the morrow his life on Calvary. He sacrifices himself mystically on the table of the Last Supper which he made his altar, and which he will not leave but to go and sacrifice himself, in a bloody manner, on the altar of the cross.

According to the opinion most generally received, Jesus Christ having broken the bread changed into his body, takes the first part to himself, and gives the others to his disciples; he likewise drinks first of the consecrated chalice, which the others were afterwards to drink of successively.

Oh! what a spectacle is that of the Communion of Jesus Christ! That adorable Savior holds himself in his hands, raises himself to his mouth, and becomes his own food; thus giving to his human nature the strength to make the painful sacrifice whose hour was drawing near. That heavenly bread is a greater succor to him than would have been the twelve legions of angels

* Ps., cxxvii. 3.

of which he afterwards spoke in the Garden of Gethsemane. King of martyrs, he first of all takes the divine food that will make the martyrs invincible in their torments.

Oh, Communion of Jesus Christ ! what a subject of admiration you offer to us ! Yes, you are the only truly worthy Communion—for none but the heart of God can be the worthy sanctuary of God. Oh, how pleasing it is to us to think that the homage you deserve in the sacrament of love, you offered to yourself, acting then in the name of the whole human race, and that thus, through you, we have worthily adored, blessed, and thanked you !

The apostles, after having adored the body and blood of Jesus Christ beneath the sacramental veils, receive them from his hands, nourish themselves with them, and first relish the sweetness of the bread of angels. They all participate in the divine banquet their adorable Master prepared for them, and by which he feeds and strengthens their souls, and makes them live by his own life.

APPLICATION.

In recalling to mind the great mystery of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, let us renew our faith in the real presence ; let us adore God, hidden in his own sacrament ; let us give him glory, saying with the Church : “How loving is thy heart, O Lord, since, to feed thy children, thou givest them a delicious bread which is no other than thyself!” *

* Office of the Most Holy Sacrament.

Let us love and thank God who gives himself to us. He loved us to excess; can we then hesitate to consecrate our hearts to him; to praise his goodness and devote ourselves wholly to his glory?

Let us assist at Mass and approach to Communion with the dispositions of the faithful apostles at the last supper, when they received into their hearts the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Let us go to the holy table with St. Peter's faith and St. John's love, so as to participate abundantly in all the graces of that sacrament of faith and love.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, heavenly Shepherd, full of compassion, what a gift thou presentest to Earth, by establishing the adorable Eucharist! How this mystery proclaims aloud thy love towards us! O Lord, in the name of that love, and by the intercession of thy most holy Mother, grant that I may always approach worthily to thy holy table, and that I may find in the heavenly food presented to me, an increase of grace that may efficaciously prove to me the source of life and glory, which I hope to obtain through thine infinite mercy.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 329.)

FOURTH MEDITATION.

THE TEACHINGS OF FAITH CONCERNING THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“Blessed are they that . . . have believed.”—St. John, xx. 29.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us recall to mind the doctrine of the Church in reference to the Holy Eucharist; what marvels are contained in that miracle which surpasses our poor reason.

At the last supper the Apostles placed bread and wine on the table; but after the words of consecration the bread and wine, over which they were pronounced, are no more; they have been changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The same miracle is wrought in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, by the ministry of the priest. These words: *This is my body; this is my blood*, have then in his mouth infallibly the same power as they had at the last supper in the mouth of Jesus Christ. It is he who pronounces them through his priests. “When,” says St. Chrysostom, “you see the priest offer up the holy sacrifice, believe that it is not the priest who acts, but the invisible hand of Jesus Christ.”

Thus after the Consecration, there is no longer bread

or wine upon the altar, but the true body and the true blood of Jesus Christ. That which was seen no longer exists ; nothing of the substance of bread and wine is left, the words of consecration have destroyed all ; all is changed into what those words expressed, namely, into the body and blood of our Savior. Of the first matter of the sacrament there remains nothing but the accidents or appearances.

We do not see what really is, but we believe it on the authority of God himself. The senses here fail, but faith teaches us the truth, for Jesus Christ said : “The bread which I give, is my flesh for the life of the world.” *

The dogma of the real presence has been the belief of the apostles, martyrs, confessors, and doctors ; it is the belief of the holy Church which never ceases to remind the faithful of it, and anathematizes by its councils all who dare to doubt it.

All the Fathers have proclaimed that the substance contained under the sacramental species is Jesus Christ, the divine Word, the Eternal, the only Son of the Father, the God-Man, the Author of our salvation.

“As truly,” says St. Ambrose, “as Jesus Christ is the true Son of God, in the heavenly food, so truly do we receive his true flesh.” “Since,” says St. Cyril of Jerusalem, “it is Jesus Christ who affirms and says of the consecrated bread, *This is my body*, who would dare to call it in doubt?” “Jesus Christ,” says St. Augustine, “gave us, for our salvation, to eat of that

* St. John, xi. 52.

same flesh with which he was clothed, and in which he conversed with us."

"When you will see it offered up," says St. Chrysostom, speaking of the Holy Eucharist, "say to yourselves: this is the body that was scourged, nailed to a cross, completely covered with blood and pierced with a lance; the body that afterwards, rising from the gloom of death all radiant with glory, ascended, not merely to heaven, but to the throne of the Most High; this is the body that, by a wonderful effect of his divine charity, Jesus Christ left to us as a treasure and our nourishment. . . Yes, I show you at the altar the Lord of the angels, the Master of heaven."

But let us hear the Holy Church herself.

"It is," says she, in her office, "a dogma taught to Christians, that the bread becomes flesh, and the wine becomes blood. What you do not understand, what you do not see, a lively faith attests without regard to the order of nature. Under different species, signs without reality, the most precious gifts are hidden."*

"After the consecration," says the Council of Trent, "the true body of our Lord, and his true blood in union with his soul and his divinity, are really present under the appearances of bread and wine. . . . It has always been believed in the Church, and the holy Council declares it again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine, a conversion and change is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of our Lord, and of all the substance of the wine into

* From the *Lauda Sion.*

the substance of his blood ; which change has been very justly and very properly called by the Catholic Church *transubstantiation.**

When he said to his apostles : “*Do this for a commemoration of me,*” Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of holy orders, and gave them and their successors the power to consecrate his body and his blood. “That which the divine Savior did at the Last Supper, he ordained to be done in commemoration of him. Taught by his example, priests consecrate the bread and wine which becomes the victim of salvation.”†

Jesus Christ is not only present under the appearance of bread, and under the appearance of wine, but he is also present under each part of the species when broken or divided. “When the species is broken, remember that Jesus Christ is as entire under a particle of the host, as under the whole host. The substance is not divided, but only the outward signs ; while nothing of that which is represented, is diminished in its state or its greatness.”‡

Jesus Christ remains in the blessed sacrament so long as the species are in their integrity ; that is to say, so long as they are not consumed, or essentially altered, or divided so as no longer to be able to be distinguished.

In receiving him in holy communion with the necessary dispositions, we share in most precious, most admirable graces, graces most worthy of being the object of all our desires.

* Sess., xiii., ch. iii, iv.

† From the *Lauda Sion.*

‡ *Ibid.*

Such are the principal truths of faith in reference to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, that mystery which is by excellence a mystery of faith. Let us engrave them deeply in our souls, and submit to them with our whole reason. God has spoken, and his word is infallible while his power is infinite.

Let us then believe and adore.

APPLICATION.

By the light of faith, let us recognize the body and blood of Jesus Christ under the sacramental species. "Let us be well penetrated with this thought," says St. John Chrysostom,* "that he who is present on our altars, and received within us, is precisely the same as is seated in heaven, adored by angels, and at the right hand of infinite majesty."

"We have and receive in our Churches," says the Blessed Canisius, "the true flesh of Jesus Christ; but it is there invisible, impassible, immortal, all resplendent with a divine glory which we cannot contemplate but with the eyes of faith, while it is a source of ineffable delight to the saints in heaven."

"It is," says the author of the Imitation, "a miracle worthy of faith and which surpasses the intelligence of man, that thou, O Lord my God, true God and true man, art contained whole and entire under the species of bread and wine, and that without being consumed thou art eaten by him who receives thee."

Let us say, then, with all the true children of the

* Hom., 61.

Church, *I believe*; but let us add: O Lord, increase my faith, and make it more real, more efficacious, and unalterable.

Let us enter into the spirit of those words of the Council of Trent: "Let the faithful believe these sacred mysteries of the body and blood of Jesus Christ with such constancy and firmness of faith, and venerate them with such profound respect and such piety and devotion of heart, that they may be in a state to receive frequently that bread which is above all substances, and that it may truly be the life of their souls and the perpetual health of their minds, so that, sustained by its vigor and strength, they may pass from the pilgrimage of this miserable life to the celestial country, there to eat without any veil the same bread of angels which they now eat under the sacred species."*

PRAYER.

Hail! O true body, born of the Virgin Mary, that has truly suffered and been sacrificed for man upon the cross, from whose side, when pierced with a lance, issued blood and water. O Jesus, full of sweetness! O Jesus, full of goodness! O Jesus, son of Mary, take pity on us,† and may thy adorable sacrament be our strength and consolation during life and at the hour of our death Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 329.)

* Sess., xiii., ch. viii.

† Hymn *Ave verum*.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

EXCELLENCE OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.”—
St. John, vi. 32.

CONSIDERATION.

THERE is nothing great, nothing worthy of the admiration of angels and men, like the adorable Eucharist. Everything speaks to us of its excellence; the figures that symbolized it, the prophetic words that foretold it, the names given to it, the reality that it contains, the effects that it produces, its preeminence with what is greatest and most sacred.

How wonderful, for instance, were the manna and the Ark of the Covenant! Now, they were only figures of the Holy Eucharist, consequently far inferior to the sublime reality they represented.

If the people of Israel appreciated, and with so much reason, the miraculous bread that was their food for the forty years they remained in the desert, how could Christians sufficiently esteem the heavenly food given them until the end of the world, that divine bread which makes the strength and life of the soul, and of which Jesus Christ spoke when he said to the Jews: “Your fathers did

eat manna in the desert and they died. . . . If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.”*

If the prophets have so extolled the holy ark over which hovered the Cherubim, from which the Lord delivered his oracles, which contained the tables of the Law and was the instrument of the most astonishing miracles, how can we worthily celebrate the Christian tabernacle before which the angelic choirs prostrate themselves in adoration, where the supreme legislator is himself in person, and where he works the greatest mysteries of his love !

In what glorious terms the Holy Eucharist was announced ! Was it not of it that Jacob spoke when he said : “Aser, his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield dainties to kings.”† Is it not to the Holy Eucharist that this prophecy of Zacharias has reference : “What is the good thing of him, and what is this beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins ?”

The different names by which it is characterized, represent it as most exalted and profitable. It is called, in fact, the Eucharist or thanksgiving, the holy sacrament, the sacrament of the altar, the holy table, the sacred host, communion, the Lord’s supper, the holy mysteries, the bread of angels, the bread of heaven, the viaticum, the bread of children the victim of salvation, the bread of life, the supersubstantial bread, the food of the mind, the nourishment of the soul, the sacrament of love, the fountain of love, the bread of the strong, the divine ban-

* St. John, vi. 49, 52.

† Gen., xl ix. 20.

quet. All these expressions evidently testify its incomparable excellence.

Moreover, what glorious or honorable titles can the mind conceive, that do not apply in the greatest and most sublime degree to the Holy Eucharist? . . . Yes, human language will always be beneath the reality; for the reality is the Infinite—is God!

O divine Eucharist, what greatness is yours! You contain him by whom every thing was created, by whom all is sustained, and who is beauty and goodness itself. Round about you legions of angels prostrate themselves. Heaven humbles itself at your feet. All the celestial hierarchies pay you their homage. They see and contemplate in you the omnipotent God, before whom all the nations of earth are but as a grain of sand, and to whom all things are subject in heaven, earth, and hell.

Ah! here indeed is the miracle of miracles! Solomon, on the day of the dedication of the temple, seeing the Lord manifest his presence by a miraculous cloud, cried out: “If heaven and the heaven of heavens do not contain thee, how much less this house which I have built!”* But what need have we to envy him? Is not the Lord in our churches under the cloud of the sacramental species, which are for us the sign of his presence?

Yes, God is here, and he is hidden, annihilated; he is the new Moses veiling his shining countenance, whose brightness our eye could not endure. He is the divine sun, concealing himself behind a cloud to communicate

* 2 Paral., vi. 18.

his light to us without dazzling us. He is the Lamb sacrificed from the beginning, who unceasingly offers himself to glorify his heavenly father and save mankind. He is infinitely powerful, infinitely wise, infinitely good, giving us the strongest proof of his power, wisdom, and goodness.

The excellence of the Holy Eucharist is equally manifest, if we reflect on the effects of that sacrament. Therefore the Fathers of the Church have not ceased to extol them. The Holy Eucharist, say they, is a gift of extraordinary and sublime grace, containing the whole treasure of divine goodness towards men;* in it we find the remedy for our maladies,† expiation of our daily faults, a preservative against crime,‡ distaste for earthly things, and enlightenment of the understanding as to heavenly things,§ the germ of immortality, the seed of a glorious resurrection,|| our hope, our support, our salvation and our life.¶ It is a celestial and divine fire which purifies the soul, beautifies it, consecrates it, vivifies it, inflames it, and in some sort makes it partake of the divinity.**

All the doctors of the Church have proclaimed the greatness of the Holy Eucharist; and have said in one form of expression or another, that it is the masterpiece of the power and wisdom of God; that it is the “tree of life that renews our strength and nourishes our bodies and souls for immortality; the manna that con-

* St. Cyril of Alexandria. † St. Chrysostom. ‡ The holy Council of Trent. § St. Cyprian. || St. Cyril of Alexandria. ¶ St. Chrysostom. ** *Ibid.*

tains within it all the sweetness of heaven, the throne of the Son of God from which he invites sinners to come to him, the source of true repose which establishes us in unchangeable peace.”* Therefore St. Augustine says that God, all mighty, all wise, all rich as he is, could not have bestowed on us a greater gift.

Moreover, under what aspect can we look at the Holy Eucharist without perceiving that it contains all that is most excellent? Nothing in this world is greater, more admirable than religion; the Holy Eucharist is the most exalted thing that religion presents to our view. It is a mystery, but the abridgment of all mysteries; it is a sacrament, but the first, the greatest, the holiest, the most august, the richest of sacraments, which not only gives grace but contains the Author himself of grace; it is a sacrifice, but filled with prodigies, Jesus Christ being at the same time priest and victim; it is a sacrifice, but the only true one, the one which abolishes all others, and of which the Lord spoke by the prophet Malachias saying: “In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation.”†

It is a miracle to which all other miracles are inferior; it is a gift of God, but a gift *sui generis*, since it is God who gives, and God who gives himself: the Holy Eucharist is heaven upon earth. . . . It is then the masterpiece of divine love, the worthy object of the praise and thanksgiving of heavenly spirits and of men through all time and eternity.

* Père Nouet.

† Mal., i. 11.

APPLICATION.

Let us rejoice at the thought of what we possess in the most holy sacrament; how many treasures of which we can avail ourselves, and which the munificence of Jesus Christ has accumulated there!

Let us go and draw thence with full hands. By a truly Christian and religious conduct, let us make ourselves, as far as possible, worthy to approach very frequently to the holy table; let us in fact approach to it as often as obedience permits, while bringing to it the dispositions of purity of conscience, lively faith, and ardent love with which the saints communicated. Like them, we shall experience that nothing is more profitable to our souls, that nothing is more calculated to make us triumph over our evil inclinations, and advance with rapid strides on the path of perfection.

Let us be zealous in inspiring our pupils, and all with whom we come into relation, with a lively and affectionate devotion to the holy sacrament. Christian teachers, what can we have at heart but to lead children and young men to adore God in the Holy Eucharist, through whom alone they can place and preserve themselves in the path of virtue, and secure their everlasting happiness.

PRAYER.

Divine Jesus, who, by the institution of the most holy sacrament, hast surpassed the greatest, the sublimest, the most admirable of all thy other works, grant that

we may more and more appreciate that gift of thy sacred heart, and participate in it with fruit so that, profiting by that assistance, we may arrive in safety at the close of a happy death, and by it at the happiness of nourishing ourselves with thee in heaven. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 330.)

SIXTH MEDITATION.

THE EMMANUEL.

“They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”—St. Matt., i. 23.

CONSIDERATION.

GOD was in the most intimate relations with our first parents before their fall; he visited them, he conversed familiarly with them, he filled them with joy by his presence. He fulfilled, in regard to man in his innocence, all that is expressed by that sweet name Emmanuel, which means “*God with us.*”

Oh what consolation, what happiness for Adam and Eve! But soon, alas! they became prevaricators, and from that day the Lord withdrew from them, ceasing to maintain the same relations with them, and banishing them from paradise.

Still he did not abandon them in their misfortune. That Father, full of goodness, wished still to remain with them, to enlighten them with his truth, to help them to repair their crime, and to communicate his graces to them.

He exercised the same mercy towards their descendants, as we often see manifested in the course of ages. By the ministry of the angels he speaks to Noah, he sits

at the table of Abraham, he consoles Isaac, he blesses Jacob, he converses with Moses from the burning bush and on Mount Sinai; he goes before his people under the veil of a pillar of fire: "I will set my tabernacle in the midst of you," said he, "and my soul shall not cast you off: I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people."* Henceforth Israel can exclaim with all truth: "Neither is there any other nation so great that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions."† The Most High afterwards raises up a great number of prophets, whom he fills with his spirit, and through whom he reveals his designs upon the world.

But they were only images of miracles incomparably greater. He who said, "My delights were to be with the children of men,"‡ wished to communicate himself more directly to them, and to abide personally in the midst of them.

On the day he had decreed, he makes himself present among them, and repairs, and more than repairs, the sins of our first parents.

"The word was made flesh and dwelt among us."§ The angel who, saluting Mary on the part of heaven, said to her, "The Lord is with thee,"|| can say it to all Israel, or rather to all nations, for the Lord has come into the world and become one with us.

Nevertheless, the Incarnate Word was to become our Emmanuel in a manner no less true, but more universal.

* Levit., xxvi. 11, 12. † Deut., iv. 7. ‡ Prov., viii. 31.

§ St. John, i. 14. || St. Luke, i. 28.

His presence among men, the hope of all nations, and prepared for by the events of two thousand years, could not confine himself to the single districts of Judea and Galilee, nor limit his stay to the brief space of thirty years. The Church was to be more favored than the Jewish nation, and consequently to maintain the most intimate and marvelous relations with him. The perpetuity of his presence was necessary to realize the prophecies that style him by the name of “Emmanuel.”* It was necessary for the purpose of preserving faith and love in the hearts of his disciples through all times, as the presence of the sun above the horizon is necessary to enlighten and warm the earth. It was necessary for the fulfilment of his mission; he came to restore humanity to the state from which it had fallen, it was then necessary that he should be personally and always present with it.

And so it is, for the Incarnate Word has perpetuated his presence in the midst of us; he has made it, as it were, universal, by instituting the most blessed Sacrament of his body and blood. By the Holy Eucharist he is the Emmanuel of the Church, and the Emmanuel of each one of us.

The Church possesses him and can say to him: “I fear no evils for thou art with me.”† He fulfils these words addressed to her in the persons of the apostles: “Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.”‡ He is with her, as he was in

* Isa., vii. 14; viii. 8.

† Ps., xxii. 4.

‡ St. Matt., xxviii. 20.

the boat of Peter, to guide her and preserve her from shipwreck ; to maintain therein peace and union, and make her accomplish her mission of salvation.

He is in the Church to give himself to us ; to be the Emmanuel, not only of Christians in general, of Catholic cities and religious communities, but of each of the faithful individually.

“The Lord be with you,” says the priest to us in the holy sacrifice ; this wish is realized in the truest and most wonderful manner in the Holy Eucharist.

Is he not truly with us, that merciful Savior whom his love imprisons in our tabernacles, who invites us to visit him, who leaves the tabernacle either to bless us, or to give himself to us, to repose in our hearts, to feed us with himself, to make us become “flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone ?”*

Is he not with us, that hidden God, who in this holy sacrament makes himself our companion, our friend, our shepherd, our guide, our light, our strength ?

No, this earth is no longer a place of exile, for we profess here our father and our king. It is no longer the home of misery and tears, for he in whom are all the treasures of grace, and who makes the joy of heaven, dwells with us.

It is no longer a desert, since here is the fountain of living water springing unto eternal life. It is no longer the land which was accursed on the day of the first sin, over which resounds the thunders of divine justice, since he is there who has taken away every malediction and

* Gen., ii. 23.

whose blood, more eloquent than that of Abel, rises continually towards heaven to ask and obtain mercy.

Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist is the Emmanuel of all the faithful, the Emmanuel of the child to whom he gives himself so willingly, and whom he inundates with so sweet a joy ; of the young man whom he strengthens by his presence against the world, the flesh, and the devil ; of the man in ripe manhood with whom he labors in every good work ; of the old man, and those on the bed of death, whom he defends against the weaknesses of nature and the fear of death.

Ah ! he leaves us not when everything else leaves us ! He is our Emmanuel during the whole period of this life, so as to be our Emmanuel in the next, where his presence procures our supreme happiness.

APPLICATION.

Let us show by our conduct that we feel what an advantage it is to have the Lord with us.

Let us adore him in his sanctuary in union with the heavenly spirits there prostrate in his presence. Let us be with him, since he is with us ; let us think of him, speak of him, hold sweet discourse with him ; let him be the object of all our solicitude, all our wishes.

As often as obedience allows us, let us visit this beloved Savior. Let us go to the foot of his altar, and there, penetrated with sentiments of faith, love, humility, and confidence, let us offer him our homage and lay before him all that regards the interests of our soul. Let us then hear what he says to us in our hearts ; let

us be attentive to the sacred oracles he gives forth from the interior of his tabernacle, which is the Ark of the Covenant of the New Testament.

Let us pray to him for our relations, our brothers, our pupils, our benefactors, let us pray to him for the souls in purgatory, for those in their agony, and for sinners. Let us pray to him for ourselves, and for that purpose, implore his divine heart, which wishes nothing more than to heap graces upon us.

Let us take delight in the temple where he dwells. Let us especially appreciate the moment when that adorable Emmanuel gives himself to us to be the food of our souls. Ah! what a moment is that, when we make but one with the God of love! Let us then say to ourselves: "Silence, O my heart: behold thy God! Silence, O my intellect, hearken to thy God! Silence, O self-loye: die to thyself, that nothing may live in my soul but the love of God who gives himself to me!"

PRAYER.

O Jesus, my light, my strength, my joy, my hope, my life, be with me now and always.

Be with my mind to enlighten it, with my heart to inflame it, with my will to direct it. Be with me in my temptations and my trials, in my labor and repose, in my health and sickness. Be with me, above all, at the hour of my death, so that, through thee, it may be the hour of my entrance into that place of happiness where the elect dwell with thee for ever.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 330.)

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF LIFE.

“To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life.”
—Apoc., ii. 7.

CONSIDERATION.

THE mystery of the Holy Eucharist has from the beginning of the world had a marvellous type in the tree of life.

In the designs of God, man, who is the most perfect of visible creatures, was not meant to die; still it was towards that end that his nature tended—for by its own action, and independently of every exterior cause of destruction, animal life becomes weak and dies, like a fire that blazes and then goes out, consuming gradually what it fed upon.

That man might be enabled to preserve life, he needed an element that would prove a perfect restorative, a food that would compensate for all waste in him, and wholly renew his vigor, more or less weakened. That food, God had created and placed at the disposal of our first parents. “And the Lord God had planted a paradise from the beginning: wherein he placed man whom he had formed. And the Lord God brought forth of the

ground all manner of trees fair to behold and pleasant to eat of: the tree of life also in the midst of paradise.” *

That tree, which surpassed in beauty and excellence all the others, perfectly fulfilled its end in regard to Adam and Eve. Nothing could be more wonderful than its fruit, by which the very substance of life was communicated to man. By feeding on it, man would have repaired the ravages of time, renewed his youth, preserved harmony in all the organs of life, kept up his vigor, and constantly enjoyed flourishing health.

O mysterious tree, how much the first man ought to have appreciated you ! If we are so much attached to life—we, who find in it only wretchedness and grief—he must have loved it still more, for whom it contained only sweetness and innocent delight ! Therefore, in what esteem must he have held your fruits, which were to him the means of always preserving it !

But alas ! Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit ; and it becomes to them the fruit of death. God pronounces the sentence of their condemnation, and subjects them to suffering and sorrow until they return to the earth from which they were taken.

The Lord said : “ Behold Adam is become as one of us, knowing good and evil : now therefore, lest perhaps he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever. . . And he cast out Adam ; and placed before the paradise of pleasure Cherubim and a flaming sword turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”†

* Gen., ii. 8, 9.

† Gen., iii. 23, 24.

Adam and Eve go forth bewailing their misfortune. They accept death as the just punishment of their sin, and yet they cherish in their souls sentiments of hope. By the light of revelation they see and hail in the future a new tree of life, whose wonderful fruit will be the heavenly food of regenerated humanity. Is not that life-giving tree the divine Eucharist?—for how many analogies does it present to the tree, its symbol, in the garden of paradise?

The Church is the new earthly paradise, where men redeemed by Jesus Christ find abundantly all that is necessary for their souls; and in the midst of the Church is the adorable sacrament which constitutes all its riches. It is the mysterious tree planted by Jesus Christ himself, and at the foot of which he has written: “In me is all grace of the way and the truth; in me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits.”*

The Holy Eucharist surpasses in greatness and efficacy the other sacraments, as the tree of life surpassed all the other trees of paradise.

It perfectly renews the strength of the soul, as the royal prophet had announced, saying: “Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion, who satisfieth thy desire with good things: thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle’s.”† Isaias says also: “They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall take wings

* Eccles., xxiv. 25, 26.

† Ps., cii. 1–5.

as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary ; they shall walk and not faint.”*

Our Savior, says the sacred Council of Trent, wished that the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist should be received as the spiritual food of souls to cherish and strengthen them, making them live by the life of him who said : “ He who eateth me, shall live by me.”†

The Holy Eucharist brings a remedy to venial sin—a true and desolating spiritual malady—and it preserves from mortal sin. “ Our divine Redeemer wished,” says the same Council of Trent, “ that this sacrament should be received as an antidote by which to be delivered from our daily failings and preserved from mortal sin. He wished, moreover, that it should be the pledge of our future glory and everlasting happiness.”

The Holy Eucharist preserves the life of grace within us, and gives to that life the power and energy it ought to possess. “ It communicates to us,” says St. Ignatius, “ life in God through Jesus Christ, at the same time that it is a remedy healing our vices and banishing all evils.”

The fruit of the Eucharistic tree presents every kind of sweetness, causes the most perfect joy, and to a certain extent makes us happy here below.

It acts even on the body, and penetrates it with its vivifying virtue ; but that effect will not be manifested but on the day of the general resurrection. Oh ! with what resplendent glory shall the bodies of the saints then be filled who were here worthily nourished with the adorable sacrament of our altars !

* Isa., xl. 31.

† Sess., xvi., ch. ii.

Such are the principal analogies between the tree of life in the garden of Eden, and the Eucharistic tree. But how greatly the latter surpasses the other in excellence ! The life that it communicates is infinitely more precious than the life of nature, and not only does it preserve, but it increases and perfects it. The former of these trees was beneficial only when its fruit was eaten ; the latter profits even those who, when unable to gather its fruit, contemplate it with faith or recall it to their recollection. Ah ! what strength and consolation the Christian soul finds under the shadow of the tabernacle ! Who has not experienced the advantages of visit to the most holy sacrament ? Who is ignorant that under the trials of this life of warfare, the very thought of the God of the Holy Eucharist is a real assistance ?

APPLICATION.

Let us go frequently to repose at the foot of the new tree of life. Let us love and renew as often as possible our visits to the holy sacrament. Let us say with the prophet : " Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God ! " * It is there we shall find the consolation of which our soul stands so much in need.

Let us bless the infinite goodness of God, who has placed at our disposal the inestimable treasure of the Holy Eucharist. Let us exalt the generosity of our divine Savior, who has become our food to communicate true life to us in superabundance.

Let us ardently desire and frequently nourish our-

* Ps., lxxxiii. 4.

selves with his sacred body,—that vivifying fruit which has been the delight of the saints, at the same time that it communicated to them the strength and heroism which they continually showed under their trials.

Yes, let us approach the tree of life. Who hinders us from doing so? . . . There are no armed Cherubim with swords of fire forbidding access to it. Let us go then to pluck and eat its fruit, so beneficial to those who eat of it with the requisite dispositions. Yes, let us communicate frequently, but always with great purity of conscience, true devotion, and ardent love.

Let us preserve afterwards, by vigilance and prayer, the spiritual health of which the holy Communion is the source: by the virtue of the holy Eucharist, let our conduct be truly that of saints, and we shall merit to have those words of the angel of the Apocalypse wholly fulfilled in us: “To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of my God.” . . .

PRAYER.

Divine Savior! whom I receive in thy adorable sacrament, thou alone art the whole life of my soul. Oh, grant, I beseech thee, that I may approach thee with a heart free from every fault and glowing with fervor, so that thy most holy body may be my strength and my salvation; and after having been nourished here below with that fruit of life, I may be admitted to eat of it with the saints and angels in the mansions of eternal life.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 331.)

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

THE PASCH OF THE JEWS AND THE HOLY COMMUNION.

“For Christ, our Pasch, is sacrificed.”—1 Cor., v. 7.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us consider what was the Pasch of the Jews, and how it was a figure of the holy Communion, or the Pasch of the Christians.

When about to deliver his people from captivity, the Lord said to Moses and Aaron: “Speak ye to the whole assembly of the children of Israel, and say to them: On the tenth day of this month let every man take a lamb by their families and houses. . . You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and the whole multitude of the children of Israel shall sacrifice it in the evening. And they shall take the blood thereof and put it upon both the side-posts, and on the upper door-posts, of the house wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh that night roasted at the fire, and unleavened bread, with wild lettuce. . . You shall gird your reins, and you shall have shoes on your feet, holding staves in your hands; and you shall eat in haste: for it is the Phase (that is, the passage) of the Lord.

“And I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and will kill every first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. . . . And the blood shall be unto you for a sign in the houses where you shall be ; and I shall see the blood and shall pass over you : and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I shall strike the land of Egypt.

“And this day shall be a memorial to you ; and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord in your generations with an everlasting observance. . . .

“And when your children shall say to you, What is the meaning of this service ? you shall say to them : It is the victim of the passage of the Lord when he passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, striking the Egyptians and saving our houses. . . . In one house shall it be eaten ; neither shall you carry forth of the flesh thereof out of the house ; neither shall you break a bone thereof. All the assembly of the children of Israel shall keep it.”*

Behold what the Pasch of the Jews was ! Now, how many analogies it offers to the holy Communion, or Christian Pasch, of which it was the figure !

Is not Jesus Christ the God of the Holy Eucharist, the Lamb of the new law, the lamb offered in sacrifice and whose blood is our salvation, the Lamb whose flesh we ought to eat in memory of the passage of our Lord ?

The prophets had beheld the Messiah as a “lamb silent before the shearer.”† His holy precursor had said of him, when pointing him out to the Jews :

* Exodus, xii. 3-47.

† Isa., liii. 7.

"Behold the Lamb of God! behold him who taketh away the sins of the world."* In the book of the Apocalypse he is frequently called the Lamb, and presented to us under the image of a lamb who had been slain. The Church says in her office : "Jesus Christ, our Pasch, has been sacrificed ; for he is truly the Lamb who has taken away the sins of the world, who has destroyed our death by his own, and has given us life by his resurrection."

"All that had been prescribed by the command of God and the ministry of Moses regarding the sacrifice of the paschal lamb," says St. Leo the Great, "was prophetic of Jesus Christ and foretold his sacrifice."†

Yes, that divine Savior is the Lamb of the new law. He was sacrificed in the afternoon on Mount Calvary, during the celebration of the Pasch ; in him was fulfilled what was commanded regarding the figurative lamb, even to this detail : "Neither shall you break a bone thereof." He offers himself in an unbloody manner on our altars, where for us he unceasingly renews the sacrifice of the cross.

The blood of the first paschal lamb kept from the houses that were marked with it the destroying angel. But if it had this power only because it was a figure of the blood of the Divine Lamb ;—what then must be the virtue of that blood itself ! If in its prophetic symbol it brought salvation to the Jews, how great is it by itself, and what can it not effect !

* St. John, i. 29.

† Preface at the paschal season.

Let us remember that the holy Fathers * have called it the divine ransom by which we were redeemed from sin, from death and hell; the price of the deliverance of all mankind; an antidote, a sovereign remedy, a celestial food; a sweet and delicious draught that quenches our thirst, freeing us from the dangerous thirst for the pleasures of sense, and leaving us only the thirst after justice; an ornament adorning the soul; a salutary bath that purifies us, according to those words of the Apocalypse: "Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb."† Let us remember that that blood shall be for us a salutary sign, turning aside the arrows of divine justice, or rather satisfying it in full for us. "O kingly Christ," exclaims St. Avitus, when treating of this subject, "recognize then your divine blood in us, and deliver your subjects from the captivity of Egypt; and wherever, O spotless Lamb! you shall be offered up in sacrifice and your flesh shall be received as food, turn aside from thence your avenging arm."

All the children of Israel were to participate in the feast of the Pasch, in the same manner as all Christians are bound to participate in the Eucharistic banquet. Such is the precept of Jesus Christ, for he said: "Amen, amen, I say unto you: unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you."‡ It is a precept of the Church which, according to the sacred canons, ceases to consider those who neglect their paschal duty as her children, while on the

* St. Chrysostom, St. Anselm, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Thomas, &c. † Apoc., xxii. 14. ‡ St. John, vi. 54.

other hand she testifies a desire that the faithful should partake frequently, and even daily, of the holy communion—that divine banquet of the great Christian family, to which all are invited, and whose table is prepared in every tabernacle.

The law gave a command to the Jews how they were to eat the paschal lamb ; the Church also instructs us with what dispositions we should communicate ; and here we find an analogy very well worthy of observation. To communicate with profit, we need purity of conscience and fervor ; but what does that mean but that we should eat the flesh of the divine Lamb, clothed with the robe of innocence, our loins girt by charity, and supported on the staff of hope—seasoning our divine food with the unleavened bread of sincerity, and the bitter lettuce of mortification—keeping the eyes of the soul raised towards heaven—being ready to set out from this land of exile to go unto the true land of promise ?

Finally, let us consider that, as the Jewish Pasch was celebrated in memory of the passage of the Lord and of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, so we communicate in memory of the passage of Jesus Christ upon earth, and of our deliverance from death and hell brought about by that divine Savior.

When we ask the Church the meaning of the sacred banquet to which she invites us, she answers, “It is the passage of the Lord ” which we commemorate, and which in a certain sense is still going on.

The Word became flesh, and passed from the bosom of his Father to that of Mary by the Incarnation.

Born of that glorious Virgin, he lived among us, and went about doing good. A victim for our sins, he passed from life to death. Conqueror over hell, he afterwards passed from death to life. Now, his sacrament is the memorial of his passage; it is the commemoration of his incarnation, his life, his death, and his resurrection.

His sacrament is not only the commemoration of his passage, but his passage itself; for at the words of consecration spoken by the priest, the Incarnate Word becomes present under the sacred species. He comes afterwards to all those who communicate, and while giving himself to them, he gives the most precious graces.

APPLICATION.

Invited to eat the flesh of the Lamb of God, let us by grace place ourselves in the dispositions necessary for doing so with fruit. The table is prepared; everything is ready for the sacred banquet. Let us approach it, but clothed with innocence, glowing with fervor, free from all attachment to creatures, hungry for the heavenly food, anxious to partake of it in this life, so as to be worthy to partake of it in the life to come.

Travellers towards eternity, let us go and draw from the table spread by God the strength necessary to complete our toilsome pilgrimage, to escape the innumerable perils that unceasingly arise before us, and to arrive in safety at the true land of promise, where flow the milk and honey of heavenly delights.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, divine Lamb, who offerest thyself in sacrifice for me, let thy blood be to me a saving sign, and withdraw me from the arrows of divine justice which I have merited by my sins ; let thy flesh, on which I so frequently banquet, purify me, strengthen me more and more, and let me live in thee !

I am passing on, hastening with rapid strides to eternity ; may I pass through life in company with thee, so that my departure from this land of bondage may be my entrance into the true land of promise which is the object of all my hopes.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 331.)

NINTH MEDITATION.

THE MANNA—A FIGURE OF THE EUCHARIST.

“Not as your fathers did eat manna, and died. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.”—St. John, vi. 59.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS CHRIST said to the Jews : “I am the living bread which came down from heaven;”—but not believing these words, or not understanding them, they murmured against him. Therefore, insisting on the truth of what he said, he added: “I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any one eat of it, he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. . . . Not as your fathers did eat manna, and died. He that eateth this bread shall live forever.”*

Our divine Master, therefore, teaches us that the Holy Eucharist was prefigured by the manna. It has in truth striking analogies with that miraculous food, but from every one of these analogies it is evident that it infinitely surpasses it in excellence.

The manna was given to the Jews without their having done anything to deserve it, or rather, at the very moment

* St. John, vi. 41–59.

when they were murmuring against Moses and against the Lord. "I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel," said God to Moses; "say to them: In the evening you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God." *

O ! astonishing words ! which admirably reveal the goodness of God towards those who outrage him !

But is not that goodness still more manifest in the gift of the Holy Eucharist ? What had men done to merit this divine food ? Was it not at the very time that the Jews murmured against the true Moses that it was promised ? Was it not when they were plotting against the life of the divine Liberator that it was given ? Yes, the very night when he was going to be given up, Jesus Christ made this present to men, thus answering the excess of their ingratitude by the greatest miracle of his love.

The manna was a miraculous food falling from heaven, and covering the earth in the morning like a white hoar-frost. The Holy Eucharist is an incomparably greater miracle, one which exhausts the omnipotence of God. . . . It comes from heaven, even from the heaven of heavens. . . . Ah ! it is not enough to say that it is he who in heaven constitutes the happiness of the elect ! . . . And this divine food is everywhere throughout the Christian world, and like a heavenly dew it each day covers the whole earth.

Moses called the manna the glory of God, whose

* Exodus, xvi. 12.

power and goodness it clearly manifested ; but the Holy Eucharist merits that name by a greater title still, for nowhere else are the divine attributes so manifest, and nothing else procures so much glory to God. The Holy Eucharist is, in reality, God glorifying God.

The manna was also called the bread of children. Now, the Holy Eucharist is in a special manner the bread of the children of God, bread given to them when they have come forth from the bondage of sin, and which is their food during their journey in the desert of life.

Manna was a most nutritious substance, having the taste of flour mixed with honey. That taste, moreover, varied, and adapted itself to the wish of those that eat it, as these words of the Wise Man show : “ Thou didst feed thy people with the food of angels, and grant them bread from heaven prepared without labor ; having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste. For thy sustenance showed thy sweetness to thy children, and serving every man’s will, it was turned to what every man liked.” *

The Holy Eucharist presents all these characteristics. The substance given to us is life itself in its source and fulness. That divine food has for those who receive it devoutly the relish that they wish. It fills and contents them. Nothing created can procure similar satisfaction.

The manna of the desert cost the Jews little. But what does the manna of the new law cost Christians ?

* Wis., xvi. 20, 21.

The primary necessary substances for this sacrament are the most common. The miracle of transubstantiation is wrought by a few words which the priest pronounces in the holy sacrifice.

Manna was to the Israelites their safety and strength, and, according to the remark of Origen, they performed no exploit of consequence before being fed by it, whilst they won numberless victories after it. The Holy Eucharist is the whole strength of a Christian, who by it becomes omnipotent against the attacks of hell.

The true Israelites appreciated the manna, and made it the subject of their thanksgiving; but many being disgusted with it, craved again for the flesh-pots of Egypt, on which they had lived during their bondage. Now, does not this same thing happen regarding the Holy Eucharist? Is it not the delight of the true faithful, whilst so many Christians (unworthy of the name) disdain or despise it?

O heavenly bread! you are appreciated by souls free from sin and friendly to virtue! They love you, they desire you, they seek you, and find no happiness but in you. But alas! how many others are indifferent towards you! How many are there who, after having been fed by you, so far dishonor themselves as to feed themselves with what gratifies their passions! . . . O degraded souls! They do not wish the bread of children; they have no relish but for what is the vile food of animals. . . . What a subject of sorrowful astonishment!

The miracle of the manna lasted for forty years, and

did not cease until the day when the chosen people entered into the promised land. The miracle of the Holy Eucharist has lasted more than eighteen hundred years, and will last until the end of the world. Our fathers before us have eaten of that heavenly manna, and it has been their consolation and their happiness: we are called in our turn to feed upon it, as those will be who come after us. It is the food of the Christian until the day when, strengthened by it, he crosses the Jordan of death and enters into the land of supreme happiness, there to repose for ever in the bosom of his God.

APPLICATION.

Let us renew our esteem for the adorable Eucharist. "Consider," says St. Ambrose to us, "which is the more excellent: the food which God gave to the Israelites in the desert, or the flesh of Jesus Christ—that is to say, of him who is the true life—the manna that fell from heaven, or that manna which is greater than heaven."

"The manna on which the Jews lived," says St. Cyril of Alexandria, "did not procure for them eternal life, but at most a transitory enjoyment. It was not, then, the true bread come down from heaven. But, on the other hand, the sacred body of Jesus Christ nourishes us for the immortality of eternal life."

In union with these great doctors, let us thank divine Providence, which gives us the heavenly and life-giving bread, and which gives it to us in so great abundance. Let us sigh after the moment when we shall sustain our

souls by it ; let us hunger after it : for, says St. Jerome, “ It is the Lord himself who invites us to partake of his divine banquet.”

Let us go to draw from holy communion the strength necessary to cross the desert of this life without yielding to the weakness of our frail nature, or to the attacks of our enemies, so numberless and so cruel.

Let us prepare those under our charge to communicate with profit. We are, in their regard, Moses announcing to the people the miracle that God was about to work. In preparing our pupils for holy communion, shall we not say to them : “ You will see the glory of the Lord appear to-morrow morning, for he will satiate you with the bread of life ? ” Let the thought of this make us esteem our mission, and think how great is the ministry of those who lead souls to the holy table.

Let us ourselves draw near to it. Let us approach it with faith, love, and confidence, so that the bread of heaven may profit us and prove our strength and our life.

PRAYER.

Hail, O divine Eucharist ! bread of heaven, manna given to the new people of God, glory of the Lord, delicious food after which I hunger !

O Jesus ! give me always of that bread. Grant that I may communicate with good dispositions, and that, strengthened by that food of the strong, I may deserve to partake of it in heaven, where it is the source of boundless happiness.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 332.)

TENTH MEDITATION.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST PREFIGURED:—

BY THE RIVER FLOWING THROUGH THE GARDEN OF EDEN, THE WATER FROM THE ROCK, THE SACRIFICE OF MELCHISEDECH, THE ARK OF THE COVENANT.

“He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord; he hath given food to them that fear him.”—Ps., cx. 4, 5.

CONSIDERATION.

THE Lord hath perpetuated the memory of his wonderful works by summing them up in the Holy Eucharist. Let us then appreciate with our whole souls this marvel of his omnipotence and his infinite goodness; and to increase the esteem of it more and more in our hearts, let us consider it in the principal objects that were its prophetic images.

The Holy Eucharist was prefigured by that river flowing through the earthly paradise, which at its source divided into four channels, forming each a new river, and whose waters carried everywhere coolness and fertility. The Church is the new garden of paradise, and from the altar which is in its midst the divine blood flows unceas-

ingly, forming a salubrious river that flows through it, rejoicing it, and making it produce all kinds of fruits of virtue and holiness. "There issued from the earthly paradise," says St. John Chrysostom, "a fountain that divided into several sensible and material rivers; and from the Holy Eucharist there issues a fountain that feeds many spiritual rivers."

Happy the souls that slake their thirst at this life-giving stream! They keep themselves pure in the sight of God; they acquire more and more vigor from day to day; they become capable of the most heroic virtues, while at the same time they experience the sweetest joys.

The Holy Eucharist was prefigured by that water from the rock which served the whole people of Israel to slake their thirst at, and which saved them from death. The rock of Horeb was, as the great apostle of the Gentiles says,* a symbol of Jesus Christ; and the water that issued from it, an image of the divine blood by which that adorable Savior was to provide for the wants of fallen humanity. "For the Jews," says St. Ambrose, "water flowed from a rock; but for you there flows the blood of Jesus Christ. The Jews did not slake their thirst but for a time, and you may do so for eternity. The Jews drink, and they still thirst; but for you, when you shall have tasted of this divine drink, you shall no more thirst. The Jews possessed only the shadow; and you,—you possess the reality. If the shadow was so wonderful, what must be the reality?"

* 1 Cor., x. 4.

The Holy Eucharist was prefigured by the sacrifice of Melchisedech, that priest of the true God whose name signifies "King of peace," and who, after having blessed Abraham, made an offering to the Lord of bread and wine as a homage of adoration and thanksgiving. Is not Jesus Christ in fact a priest according to the order of Melchisedech,* the prince of peace,† who blessed the Christian people in the persons of the apostles, who established the sacrifice by which alone the heavenly Father is adored and thanked, and of which he is himself the victim under the appearance of bread and wine ?

The Holy Eucharist, as the holy Church says,‡ was prefigured by the sacrifice of Isaac ; for Jesus Christ is the true Isaac, whose sacrifice was consummated on Calvary, and is continued mystically on our altars for the salvation of the world. It was also prefigured by the corn which the patriarch Joseph amassed in the granaries of Egypt, and with which he was to feed so many persons. Has not Jesus Christ, the new Joseph, opened immense granaries in his Church, where the food of Christians is found in superabundance ? Therefore, that adorable Emmanuel alone has merited the title of the Savior of the world, by which the son of Jacob was styled ! Ah ! it is he indeed who saves the human race from the horrors, by offering them that miraculous wheat which is no other than his own body.

The Holy Eucharist was prefigured by the loaves of proposition, which were made of the purest flour, were offered to God as a perpetual sacrifice of thanksgiving,

* Ps., cix. 4.

† Isa., ix. 6.

‡ From the *Lauda Sion.*

and which none but the priests were allowed to eat. In fact, it is in its first matter composed of the purest flour, and contains in itself him who is our strength and our life; it is offered to God as a perpetual sacrifice of thanksgiving for all his favors; the priests who alone can touch it, ought first of all to partake of it, and afterwards to distribute it to the faithful.

What occasion for us to admire the goodness of God who, under the law of grace, admits us all to eat of the sacred bread, thus raises us in a sense to the priesthood, and reminds us that we make one with the priest who sacrifices in our name.

The Eucharist was prefigured by the Ark of the Covenant,—and here how many analogies deserve our consideration.

The Ark of the Covenant was the centre of the Jewish worship. It was above all by it that the Lord resided with his people, that he went and came into the tents of Israel. It was from above the propitiatory that covered it that he gave forth his oracles. It contained the tables of the law; it brought to mind the numberless miracles wrought by the Lord in favor of his people. The Hebrews regarded it as an object of the most profound respect; they did not even dare to look at the veil that covered it, it was their glory and their strength; nothing was of more service to them against their enemies. Now, does not the Holy Eucharist present analogous traits, and infinitely more wonderful?

Is it not the centre of the Christian religion, the prin-

cipal object of our worship, the propitiatory whence the Lord delivers his oracles, the means by which he resides with us, going and coming in the midst of his new people ? Is it not the memorial of the numberless prodigies which Jesus Christ has wrought in our favor ?

Is not the pious soul seized with the most profound respect in presence of the most holy sacrament ? Does it not fear to fix its eyes on the sacred species which are the veil beneath which the Lord hides himself from our eyes ?

In fine, is not the Holy Eucharist our glory, our support, our safeguard, our defence, our salvation, incomparably more than the Ark of the Covenant was for the Jewish people ?

O how excellent, then, is this adorable sacrament of our altars, since what is greatest, most sublime, most worthy of veneration, was only a shadow or very imperfect image of it !

O divine Eucharist ! it is of you that it is written : "The author of that work is contained in his work." In you is contained the God who spoke to our first parents in the garden of paradise, the God of Abraham, the God of Moses, the Lord of Israel. His works are ineffable, and you unite them all in one. Ah ! who, then, will ever be able to praise you worthily ?

APPLICATION.

Let us admire the adorable Eucharist. Let us love to proclaim its dignity, and make it known and appreciated. Let us show ourselves the true apostles of

the holy sacrament; let us have nothing more at heart than to develop, in the souls confided to us, a great love towards the God who dwells in our midst.

Let us enter into the spirit and practice of this devotion, the dearest to the hearts of the faithful; let us assist with piety at the divine sacrifice; let us carefully prepare ourselves for holy communion, so as to bring innocence and fervor to the altar. After having received the bread of angels, let us lead a truly angelic life, as far as we can, in mortal bodies.

Let us frequently visit our Lord in the holy tabernacle, that new Ark of the Covenant, from which he delivers his oracles; let us have recourse to him in all our necessities, consult him in our doubts, expose to him the state of our souls, listen with attention to what he speaks to us in the interior of our hearts, and faithfully put it in practice.

By this means we shall be enabled to traverse safely the desert of this life, and to enter into the promised land where we shall enjoy the happiness of the elect.

PRAYER.

O sacrament of my God, adorable Eucharist, commemorative monument and abridgment of all miracles, holy Ark where the Lord reposes upon the Cherubim and manifests his will to us, be all things for ever to me!

O Jesus who, under the appearances of the new loaves of proposition, givest us thy body to be our food, grant that I may receive thee worthily during life, and at the hour of my death! Yes, I beseech thee, thus grant that

I may die possessing thee in my heart; for to leave this world, strengthened by thy holy sacrament, is to cross the river Jordan with the Ark, and to enter into the promised land where flow the milk and honey of a happiness that shall never end.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 332.)

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST PREFIGURED:—

BY THE MOSAIC SACRIFICES, THE PILLAR OF CLOUD,
THE FIELD OF BOOZ, THE BREAD OF ELIAS.

“Now these things were done in a figure of us.”—1 Cor., x. 6.

CONSIDERATION.

AMONG the figures of the Holy Eucharist that the sacred Scriptures present to us, we observe in the first place the Mosaic sacrifices which were, in fact, but prophetic symbols of the sacrifice to be offered up on Calvary, and to be continued on our altars. Doubtless, the true Israelites saw dimly what they represented; and when David said, “Offer to God the sacrifice of praise,”* he thought on the adorable host by which alone God could be worthily praised and adored.

Let us next recall to mind that pillar of cloud bright by night and shaded during the day, by which the Lord who had there established his throne, led Israel towards the promised land. Was it not an image of the blessed sacrament where our Lord dwells under the cloud of the sacred species, and by which, putting us on our guard against the false lights of pride and the ardor

* Ps., xlix. 14.

of concupiscence, as well as against the darkness of ignorance and error, he leads us in safety to the land of bliss that ought to be our inheritance ?

Was this not true, likewise, of the mysterious cloud that filled the temple on the day of its dedication, and which, manifesting the presence of our Lord, inspired Solomon with these words : “ If heavens and the heaven of heavens do not contain thee, how much less this house which I have built ? ”* By the Holy Eucharist the Lord is present in his temple. Ah ! what a subject of astonishment and admiration ! He whose attribute is immensity is confined in our sanctuaries, in our tabernacles, in our sacred vessels, in the host, in a particle of the host ! O Christians, how you have been favored above all others !

The Holy Eucharist was prefigured, as the Fathers have remarked, by the honey Samson found in the lion’s mouth, when he exclaimed : “ Out of the strong came forth sweetness.”† For what is as strong as the lion of the tribe of Juda, or as sweet as the food he offers us ? Moreover, the Church styles this divine food “ honey,” for, in the office of the blessed sacrament, she says : “ The Lord has filled his people with honey out of the rock.”‡

But let us dwell more particularly on three other figures of the Holy Eucharist : the field of Booz, the meal of the widow of Sarepta, and the bread of Elias.

The field of Booz is covered with a plentiful harvest. The virtuous Ruth, hitherto in indigence, comes to glean

* 2 Paral., vi. 18.

† Judges, xiv. 14.

‡ Ps., lxxx. 17.

there, and finds an abundance to supply her wants. She is received with kindness by Booz, who tells her not to go into any other field. Soon, by a special arrangement of Providence, she becomes the wife of that virtuous Israelite, and has the glory of being reckoned in the genealogy of our Savior.

Now, is it not manifest that Booz here is a type of Christ, and Ruth of the Christian Soul? When far from that divine Master, she is in destitution and frightful poverty; she cannot provide for her wants but by going to him, and entering into the Eucharistic field always covered with a plentiful harvest. With what goodness does Jesus Christ receive her! How he counsels her not to go and glean elsewhere! . . . And whither could she go,—for in what other field could she find the wheat necessary for her subsistence? It is in this alone all good things are given to her, and that she unites with the divine spouse on earth, while waiting to be united to him in heaven. Happy if she comes there with the virtues that Ruth exhibits—faith, piety, purity, fidelity, humility, and charity!

The prophet Elias, when he had come to Sarepta, meets at the gate of the city a widow from whom he asks a morsel of bread. “And she answered: ‘As the Lord thy God liveth, I have no bread but only a handful of meal in a pot, and a little oil in a cruse; behold I am gathering two sticks that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.’ And Elias said to her: ‘Fear not, but go and do as thou hast said; but first make for me of the same meal a little

hearth-cake and bring it to me. . . . For thus saith the Lord the God of Israel : The pot of meal shall not waste, nor the cruse of oil be diminished, until the day wherein the Lord will give rain upon the face of the earth.' She went and did according to the word of Elias . . . and from that day the pot of meal wasted not, and the cruse of oil was not diminished, according to the word of the Lord."* But is it not so with the Eucharistic bread of which the priest partakes before distributing to the faithful, which has the effect of preserving us from death, which consoles us, strengthens us, satisfies us, and which, in fine, will not diminish in the Church until the consummation of the world ?

Another trait in the life of the same prophet presents a more striking image of the divine Eucharist. When flying from the rage of Jezabel, the man of God had advanced a day's journey into the desert. Worn out with fatigue, sad, and disheartened, he seats him down under a juniper tree and says : "It is enough for me, O Lord, take away my soul, for I am no better than my fathers." Afterwards he falls asleep in the shade of the juniper tree. "But behold an Angel of the Lord touched him and said to him : Arise and eat. He looked, and behold there was at his head a hearth-cake, and a vessel of water ; and he eat and drank, and he fell asleep again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him and said to him : Arise, eat ; for thou hast yet a great way to go. And he arose and eat, and drank, and walked in the strength of that food

* 3 Kings, xvii. 10-14.

forty days and forty nights, unto the Mount of God, Horeb."

That voyage through the desert represents the life of man wherein so many difficulties are encountered, and where we so often experience faintness, *ennui*, and discouragement. But, thanks to divine Providence, a surpassingly invigorating food has been prepared for us. The messenger of the Most High, the minister of the Church, awakening us from our slumber, says to us: "Arise and eat." He shows us the Eucharistic bread, that sacred food come down from heaven, and by the strength of which we go to heaven; that viaticum of salvation which sustains us until we gain the beatific vision of him who gives it to us.

Adorable Eucharist! you are the bread of the priest who feeds himself with it daily, and whose whole life is thereby a great festival; you are the bread of Kings who, according to the prophet, were to adore and eat it;* you are the bread of the poor, that which they never ask in vain and which is never mixed with bitterness; you are the bread of the virtuous, who find in you the courage to practise the heroic virtues that constitute their glory; you are the bread of the young, whose youth you rejoice, of the old whom you console and exhilarate, of all men who are all invited to feast upon you, so as to draw thence the strength they need to fulfil their destiny, and attain to the happiness of seeing and possessing God in heaven.

* Ps., xxi. 30.

APPLICATION.

Let us recognize our Lord under the cloud that hides him from our eyes, and let us adore him in his holy sacrament. Let a lively faith show us the precious reality veiled from our senses, and make us give ourselves to God with an entire abandonment, and with all the homage due to him.

Let us approach him frequently. Let us communicate as often as allowed, but let us do so with faith, purity of conscience, humility, fervor, love, and gratitude. The Holy Eucharist will then accomplish, in our regard, all the types by which it was represented: it will be to us the victim of salvation, the cloud of fire, sweetness from strength, the field of Booz, the meal of the widow of Sarepta, the bread of Elias.

Enriched, consoled, and strengthened by the divine Sacrament, we shall arrive at that goal where the union of the soul with Jesus Christ is consummated, where man possesses true life, where he reposes for ever on the mountain of happiness.

PRAYER.

“O Lord, my soul weighed down by *ennui* and weariness, suffers from hunger, and I have nothing to give it for I am in destitution. But do thou, O my God, who hast treasures in abundance, give food to satisfy my hunger, my weakness, and languor. Behold I strike and wait at the door of thy mercy. I beseech thee, by

the bowels of thy charity, command that it be opened to unhappy me, so that I may be able freely to approach thee, to rest in thee, and worthily to eat of thy flesh which is the bread of the elect.”*

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 333.)

* Prayer of St. Anselm.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES IN THE WILDERNESS.

“Whence then should we have so many loaves in the desert as to fill so great a multitude ?”—St. Matt., xv. 33.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us recall to mind the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, and see what analogies it offers, with what continually takes place on the holy altar ?

Jesus Christ, at the approach of the solemnity of the Pasch, was in the desert where a great multitude had followed him, anxious to listen to his divine teachings. As day declined, the twelve apostles said to him : This place is uninhabited, and it is now very late ; dismiss then the people that they may go to the villages and places around to seek for shelter and food. It is not necessary, said he, that they should go ; give them something to eat.

Philip said to him : “Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient that every one may take a little.” And Jesus said to them : “How many loaves have you ?” Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, answered : “There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two fishes : but what are they among so many ?” Jesus said : “Bring them to me.”

He took the five barley loaves and two fishes, and having ordered the people to sit down, he raised his eyes to heaven, and returning thanks to God his Father, he blessed the loaves and afterwards the fishes, and gave them to his apostles to distribute them among the crowd. All eat and were filled, and there remained twelve baskets full of the fragments. Now the number of those that were thus fed was five thousand, without reckoning the women and children.

Is it not evident that this miracle was a figure of the Holy Eucharist? Is not that multitude assembled in the desert, an image of the human race which, after Adam's fall, wandered through the desert of life, deprived of guidance and sustenance, tormented by an overpowering craving after truth, sighing for the divine Master who was to come from heaven to instruct and deliver them?

Were not the apostles who wished to send away the multitude like all the teachers who had preceded them, and who, knowing perhaps little of the wants of souls, and unable to provide for them, were under the necessity of saying: Let them go and seek the food they need?

But Jesus Christ came at the time he had fixed upon. He knows that man lives not on bread alone, but on the word of God, and consequently on himself who is the word of God. He alone can give us the nourishment that our spiritual nature requires. He will give it to us; for he says, in speaking of us all, "I have compassion on the multitude;" and after having fed us with his teachings, he will feed us with himself.

The apostles had prepared every thing for the last paschal supper. They had placed bread on the table which was to be changed into the bread of angels, given to the twelve, and afterwards to the faithful till the end of time.

In the desert, the power of Jesus Christ fed five thousand men with five loaves: here it is millions upon millions of men, and of all generations, till the end of the world. But what does number matter? Jesus Christ is God, and God is omnipotent. What he did for the multitude that followed him is only a shadow of what he will do for all Christians, when at the last supper he consecrates the bread and wine.

Let us contemplate him working this miracle, creating the Eucharistic bread with which the apostles were fed, and which in their hands and those of their successors will be multiplied without limit.

But how far more excellent is this last multiplication than that which was its figure!

The food that was given to the multitude in the desert was a material bread; that which is given in the Church is a supernatural bread. The substance of the first was of ordinary food; the substance of the other is the very body of Jesus Christ. The former was the result of a miracle, the latter is the result of the greatest of miracles, and contains the very Author of all miracles.

The effects of the bread given in the desert, were to appease their hunger and restore strength. The effects of the Eucharistic bread are to fill the soul, to give it strength to continue its journey towards eternity, to

transform it into him on whom it feeds, that is to say, into Jesus Christ himself.

The multitude that eat the miraculous bread in the desert, wished to proclaim Jesus their King and liberator; Christians who eat the Eucharistic bread with due dispositions, acknowledge that divine Savior as their Lord and their God, they love him, follow him faithfully, and are ready to sacrifice every thing to give him glory, and to testify their gratitude towards him.

APPLICATION.

Let us be convinced that not only have we no reason to envy the Jews who were fed with a miraculous bread, but that our lot is infinitely better than theirs. Therefore let us admire the goodness, the love, the generosity of Jesus Christ towards us, and let us not cease to bless and to thank him.

Oh! what gratitude we owe him. For us, he has become the life-giving bread which is distributed to us by his ministers. His providence prepares a table for us in this desert of earth; and on that table a divine food.

O unheard of prodigy! Bread is given to us in the name of God, and that bread is Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, the Son of God made man. . . And thus we, poor miserable creatures, are permitted to nourish our souls with God himself!

And this miracle which has been going on for ages all over the world will continue to the end of time! How, then, can we worthily celebrate the munificence of

its Author? How can we sufficiently bless that God of love for a favor that exhausts the admiration of heaven itself?

Yes, let us appreciate the heavenly bread presented to us in the Church, and desire it with all the ardor of our souls. Let us say with the Jews fed with the miraculous bread: "Lord, give us always this bread!"

And for what else could our souls long here on earth? What Christian, penetrated with lively faith, would not share in the sentiments of that pious virgin* who exclaimed: "How I long to see the tabernacle door open! My heart throbs with the desire of possessing him who is my life. O divine Eucharist, how sweet it is to be united to you! Yes, you alone can appease the hunger that torments my soul!"

Let us earnestly beg of our Lord, besides experiencing these desires, the grace of always making fervent communions. On our side, let us neglect nothing that can obtain this.

After the example of the multitude whom Jesus Christ fed with miraculous bread, let us follow him into the desert by a true separation from the world, and by the practice of mortification.

Let us follow in his footsteps by the imitation of his virtues; let us listen to his word with an entire faith in the teachings of his Church; let us obey his apostles by the greatest docility to those who have charge of us.

Oh, how profitable then will that sacred bread be to us—the bread of God by which true life is given.

* Marie Eustelle.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, who didst say, “I have compassion on the multitude for they have nothing to eat !” have compassion on me who am in such great spiritual indigence, and give my soul the food for which it hungers.

Grant, O God of goodness, that that miraculous bread which thy ministers are commissioned to distribute to the faithful, may be given to thy poor servant, and may hinder me from sinking through weakness on the path which I must follow !

Grant that I may worthily partake of it, with faith, love, hope, humility, and fervor, so that it may be my strength and my joy, and by it I may follow thee constantly, until after having traversed with thee the desert of life, I may be admitted to enter after thee into the heavenly Jerusalem.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 333.)

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST ANNOUNCED OR FORETOLD.

“What is the good thing of him, and what is his beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins ?”—Zach., ix. 17.

CONSIDERATION.

THE divine Eucharist was foretold long before the coming of Jesus Christ. Isaac, when blessing Jacob, the inheritor of the divine promises, said to him : “God gave thee of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth abundance of corn and wine.” * Now, what is this in a spiritual sense, this corn and wine, but the body and blood of Jesus Christ, that God who was to be given by heaven to earth, and of whom it is said : “Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just ; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Savior.” †

Jacob, in his turn, blessing his children, saw in prophetic vision the divine sacrament of our altars : “Aser, his bread shall be fat and he shall yield dainties to kings.” ‡

* Gen., xxvii. 28.

† Isa., xlvi. 8.

‡ Gen., xlix. 20.

But let us hear the Holy King David proclaiming the excellence of the Holy Eucharist : “The Lord,” saith he, “ruleth me. . . . He hath set me in a place of pasture, he hath brought me up on the waters of refreshment. . . . Thou hast anointed my head with oil ; and my chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly is it !* O taste and see that the Lord is sweet !†

“The poor shall eat and shall be filled.‡ Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him, and on them that hope in his mercy, to deliver their souls from death and to feed them in famine.§ How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts.|| Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God.¶ As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, O God.** He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works . . . he hath given food to them that fear him.†† Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, who . . . filleth thee with the fat of corn.‡‡ I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.”§§

Who does not recognize in those accents the sentiments of a soul placed by the Holy Ghost in presence of the adorable sacrament, and to whom he showed that miracle of divine munificence a thousand years in advance ? Solomon speaks of it when he places this invitation in the mouth of Wisdom : “Come eat my

* Ps., xxii. 1-5. † *Ibid.*, xxxiii. 9. ‡ *Ibid.*, xxi. 27.

§ , xxxii. 19. || *Ibid.*, lxxxiii. 2.

¶ *Ibid.*, 4. ** *Ibid.*, xli. 2. †† *Ibid.*, cx. 4, 5.

‡‡ *Ibid.*, cxlvii. 12, 14. §§ *Ibid.*, cxv. 13.

bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you.”*

Isaias, in his turn, contemplates the divine Eucharist : “ O Lord,” says he, “ thou hast been a strength to the poor. . . a refuge from the whirlwinds, a shadow from the heat. . . And the Lord of hosts shall make unto all people in this mountain a feast of fat things, a feast of wine, of fat things full of marrow, of wine purified from the lees.”†

All interpreters have applied to the holy sacrifice of the Mass this prophecy of Malachias : “ From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles ; and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation ; for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.”‡ They have also recognized allusion to the Holy Eucharist in these words of Zacharias : “ What is the good thing of him, and what is his beautiful thing but the corn of the elect and wine springing forth virgins.”

The Lord who had spoken by his prophets, speaks himself of the adorable sacrament, representing it in the gospel under the emblem of a banquet to which those who are first invited refuse to go, and among those who come afterwards to take part in it is found a man not having on a nuptial garment, and he is cast into outer darkness.§

But he had already taught this doctrine more

* Prov., ix. 5. † Isa., xxv. 4, 6. ‡ Mal., i. 11.

§ St. Matt., xxii. 2-14.

expressly, for soon after the miracle of the multiplication of the five loaves in the desert, the Jews whom he had fed having come to find him, he said to them : “ Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you. . . . Moses gave you not bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. . . . Then they said to him : Lord, give us always this bread. And Jesus answered them : I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and they died. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever, and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” The Jews who had already murmured when he said, “ I am the living bread which came down from heaven,” began to debate among themselves, saying : “ How can this man give us his flesh to eat ? ” Jesus Christ does not explain to them how it is to be done, but still he insists upon it : “ Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father : so he that eateth me the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.”*

These words were a trial for the faith of the disciples many of whom separated from him ; but the apostles

* St. John, vi. 50, 52.

remained faithful, saying to him in the words of St. Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

Thus the great mystery of the Holy Eucharist was revealed beforehand; mankind was told that the Incarnate Word would give them his body and blood as their food. One thing of which they were still ignorant was, how that miracle was to be wrought, but this was perfectly explained on the night of the last supper when the apostles received the body and blood of their divine Master under the appearances of bread and wine, the substances of which he changed while leaving their accidents.

APPLICATION.

Let us enter into the spirit of the divers expressions by which the adorable sacrament of the altar was foretold.

Let us proclaim it the master-piece of divine goodness, the source and fulness of the blessings of heaven, the consolation, joy, and delight of the true faithful, the source of the strength, virtue, and courage of self-sacrifice. With all the saints let us praise the God of love, who not only makes it his delight to dwell with us, but who loves us so much as to feed us with his own flesh and blood.

Let us frequently call to mind the divine works of which the holy Eucharist is the memorial, and above all in the passion and death of Jesus Christ. Let us remember that generous Savior and the redemption he

wrought; let us remember this above all during mass. When he renews for us the sacrifice of Calvary, how can we help going in thought to the holy mountain, standing at the foot of the cross, with the most holy Virgin and the beloved disciple?

Let us rejoice that our Savior is the portion of our inheritance. Let us above all love holy communion, and desire it as the thirsty hart does the springs of living water.

Let us approach the Eucharistic table, clothed with innocence, penetrated with faith, respect, confidence, and love, so that receiving worthily the wheat of the elect, we may be admitted one day to taste how sweet the Lord is to him who contemplates him face to face, and is nourished on him in the kingdom of heaven.

PRAYER.

O Jesus who testifiest thy love for thy children in becoming thyself their food, thou art about to come into my heart: oh, deign to inflame it with love for thee! Let who will seek other favors; O my divine Savior, for my part, I do not love, seek, nor wish anything but the treasure of thy love!

Give me, I beseech thee, as the fruit of the communion I am about to make, that I may entirely forget myself to remember only thee, to love only thee, to live only for thee.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 334.)

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

DESIGNS OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST, IN REGARD TO HIS FATHER.

“I honor my Father.”—St. John, viii. 49.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS CHRIST instituted the Holy Eucharist, above all to procure the glory of his heavenly Father, to give and procure him the worship of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, supplication, and love, which is his due.

The Holy Eucharist was represented by the Mosaic sacrifices: now, these were offered up to acknowledge the supreme dominion of God, to thank him for his favors, to satisfy for sin, to implore his goodness and mercy: it ought then to be established for these same ends which it should realize in a perfect degree.

Jesus Christ teaches us this at the time when he institutes it, for before consecrating the bread and wine, he raises his eyes to heaven and thanks God his Father; teaching us by this and by the words he afterwards spoke, that he established a perpetual sacrifice by which God might be worthily adored, praised, and glorified.

The prophet had said : “Praise ye him according to the multitude of his greatness.”* To praise God worthily, it is necessary then to offer him an infinite tribute of praise, which Jesus Christ did by his incarnation, his life, his labors, his sufferings and death, and which he continues to do on our altars, in our tabernacles, or our hearts. Equal to his Father, he yet is, as it were, annihilated in his presence, he unceasingly renews the sacrifice offered to him on Mount Calvary, he acknowledges and adores all his perfections, he pays him a perfect homage of dependence.

“Therefore,” as a learned and pious author † has written, “a half hour of the sacramental life of that divine Savior in a single tabernacle, procures more glory to God than the adorations of all the saints and angels would for eternity. The nine choirs of angels and the countless legions of the elect united together, could not offer to God a homage equal to that which Jesus as Victim has already offered, even before the priest has elevated the newly consecrated host to expose it to the veneration of the faithful.”

Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist gives us the means of rendering to God the Father a just tribute of praise and thanksgiving. In uniting ourselves to his dispositions as a Victim, our homage rises through him to the throne of the Most High, we become the adorers of the Father in spirit and truth, who accepts that prayer which we daily offer to him : “I unite myself to my Savior Jesus to render thee in him and by him all the

* Ps., cl. 2.

† Father Faber.

adorations which are due to thee ; and in this union I thank thee for all thy favors."

God has been prodigal of his gifts towards us. We cannot imagine how much we owe to his liberality. His favors in the order of nature, and still more in that of grace, are inappreciable, continual, and innumerable. He has, consequently, a right to a tribute of infinite gratitude. Jesus Christ who always offered it to him during his mortal life, offers it to him during his Eucharistic life. In his own name and in that of angels and men, he thanks him, saying : "I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast loved me before the creation of the world,"* and for the favors thou bestowest abundantly on those who belong to thee, and whom thou hast given to me.

It is with that voice the voice in our hearts should unite. When remembering what we have received from God, let us say with the prophet : "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me," but let us immediately add : "I will take the chalice of salvation ; and I will call upon the name of the Lord."† Let us go to the foot of the altar, and there offer to the Father the thanks which unceasingly ascend from the tabernacle to him. If we can, let us receive the Eucharistic Victim, and, united to Jesus heart to heart, let us offer our thanks to God his Father. Oh, how pleasing they will be to him, and what new favors they will obtain for us from his infinite goodness !

Jesus Christ institutes his sacrament to be on the altar

* St. John, xvii. 24.

† Ps., cxv. 12, 13.

what he was on the cross—the Victim of expiation repairing the outrage sin offers to God.

He is in truth in the holy Eucharist, as St. John describes him when he says: “Behold a lamb standing as it were slain.”* He offers to his Father his sufferings and his death, and from the altar or the tabernacle, the voice of his blood unceasingly ascends towards heaven, which, pleading more eloquently than that of Abel, implores the divine mercy for sinners.

At the holy altar, Jesus repairs the outrages which sinners offer to God his Father. Whilst they ignore him, offend him, blaspheme him, our divine Redeemer adores, glorifies, and blesses him, and thus offers a counterpoise to what on their side provokes his anger.

There he is—the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, the Victim who asks pardon for the guilty, saying as on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament to render to God his Father a worship of prayer. He does not cease to solicit assistance from on high for us. The altar is the mountain on which the true Moses remains with his hands raised, to obtain the assistance of God for us who fight in the plain against the enemies of our salvation.

Jesus Christ instituted his sacrament to render to God his Father a worship of love, to worthily glorify his infinite goodness. In his Eucharistic life, he gives a complete fulfilment to these words: “I love my Father.”

* Apoc., vi. 6.

With what love his divine heart burns ! Ah ! what in comparison is all the love of the seraphim ?

Jesus Christ communicates that fire to the souls who are devout towards him in his adorable sacrament. Yes, they know well he fulfils these words : " I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled,"*—and they strive to satisfy his desire.

Through him and with him they love God with a true love. Their hearts united to the heart of Jesus, participate in the love of Jesus for his Father. How pure, vivid, resplendent, is the flame of charity that arises toward that sovereign good, and how many graces it brings them !

Jesus Christ, in his sacrament, glorifies the Father in a manner worthy of his infinite perfections ; therefore the Father, for his sake, looks with kindness on the earth despite the numberless sins committed in it. He beholds the holy tabernacle in all places ; and in consideration of his beloved son, the sole object of his complacency, he shows us mercy, and does not cease to heap his favors upon us.

APPLICATION.

Let us keep ourselves in closest union with Jesus Christ, the divine mediator between us and his Father. Let us receive him with a view to the honor and glory of God, rather than our own private consolation ; and through him let us pay to that sovereign majesty, that

* St. Luke, xii. 49.

infinite goodness, the tribute of praises, thanksgiving, reparation, supplication, and love, which we owe him.

Let us adore from the depths of our hearts our Father in heaven ; let us thank him for all his favors ; let us ask pardon of him for all our sins ; let us implore his mercy for ourselves, our families, our communities, and our pupils. Let us love him with an ardent, constant, courageous love, with a love that thinks only of his glory, and aspires only to sacrifice itself to procure it. Let such be our whole aim, so that, having honored him worthily on earth, we may be admitted to see him face to face in heaven.

PRAYER.

O Eternal Father, Creator of all things ! look at the face of thy Christ in our tabernacles. We offer thee his adorations, his thanksgivings, his sacrifice, his prayers and his love, to discharge the debt we owe thee.

O holy Father, grant that we may be always perfectly united with that divine Mediator, live with him, have the same sentiments as he, so that through him we may return to thee and be admitted to glorify thee, love thee, and thank thee in thine everlasting tabernacles !

(See Résumés, page 334.)

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

DESIGNS OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST; IN RELATION TO HIMSELF AND HIS CHURCH.

“Do this for a commemoration of me.”—St. Luke, xxii. 19.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us consider the principal ends of the holy Eucharist, which refer most directly to Jesus Christ himself and to his Church.

In instituting it, Jesus Christ wished to glorify his own body, to honor that sacred flesh hypostatically united to the divinity, and to which the worship of adoration is due. He wished that, in reparation for the outrages to which it was subjected in Jerusalem, it should receive the most profound and universal veneration.

How his design is accomplished by the adorable sacrament of the altar where his adorable flesh is living and life-giving, where it serves as the food of the soul which it fortifies, elevates, glorifies, and causes to live the very life of God !

It is, if we may say so, present everywhere our sanctuaries are so multiplied ; and wherever it is adored its greatness is proclaimed, it is carried in triumph,

temples are erected to it, and festivals are solemnized in its honor.

And that glory which men pay to it is only a shadow of what the angels pay. Ah! with what sentiments of veneration do they bow down before our holy tabernacles! What homage springs from their hearts to the most sacred body of the God of love veiled under the sacramental species!

Jesus Christ instituted the holy Eucharist to honor, animate, strengthen, and perpetuate his Church, which is his mystical body. What a deposit he has confided to it in giving it his body and his blood—all that he is. How greatly has he thus elevated it above the Jewish nation, to whom he confided nothing greater than the holy Ark!

No! no society has cause to take glory to itself so much as the new Jerusalem—that city brilliant with the divine splendor of the Lamb, and in the midst of which flows the river of life!

The Holy Eucharist is the very life of the Church, and could we suppose her deprived of it, she would at once be without feasts, without sacrifice, without worship. It is the strength of the Church by its effect on souls, and particularly by the bond of affection which it establishes among the faithful.

How great is the power of this sacrament of love in penetrating us, in regard to our neighbor, with the most sincere, the most constant, and the most generous charity! Which of us—reflecting that we all partake of the same Victim, sit down at the same table, are entitled

to the same inheritance—will not remember that we are brethren, and that the most affectionate, the most intimate, the most unalterable union should exist among us?

Jesus Christ established the Holy Eucharist to be propitious not only to the Church militant, but also to the Church suffering. He is on the altar the Victim of the living and the dead. He wished to be in a countless number of tabernacles, so that they might everywhere pray through him for the faithful souls detained in the place of expiation.

Jesus Christ instituted the blessed sacrament for us to be a memorial of his divine works, and particularly of his passion and death, for he said to his apostles after the words of consecration : “Do this in commemoration of me :”—while doing this, remember me.

Yes, the Holy Eucharist is a souvenir. And what a souvenir! Others have a relation more or less direct with what they remind us of ; but here it is the subject himself and in person who reminds us of what he has done for us.

The faithful soul, in presence of the holy sacrament, says with St. Bernard : “I see by faith the Incarnate Word in every state to which his love has reduced him for us ; I see him an infant in a stable, a poor artisan in a workshop, a master teaching truth to men, a victim sacrificing himself on a disgraceful cross.” O the admirable invention of his love ! “That absence may not make him forget souls that are his spouses, he has given them,” says St. Liguori, “as a souvenir, a sacra-

ment where he remains in person: he desired no other pledge between him and them than himself, to maintain their love."

The Holy Eucharist is not only the representation but a continuation, a marvelous extension of the life of Jesus Christ upon earth. It is the memorial of his incarnation, for at the voice of the priest the Son of God becomes present under the sacramental species, as after the consent of Mary, he descended into the womb of that sinless virgin to assume our nature. It is the memorial of his birth, for he is on the altar as if newly born. It is the memorial of all the mysteries he wrought, for in his sacrament he renews them, and applies their fruits to us: he there takes our infirmities from us; from his throne there he heals diseases, casts out devils, raises the dead. It is true, then, according to the words of David: "He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord."*

The Holy Eucharist is especially the memorial of the Passion of our Lord. "The sacrifice which we offer," says St. John Chrysostom, "is the symbol of the death of Jesus Christ. He wished us to have continually present to our thoughts that he sacrificed himself for us, and he does not cease to renew the remembrance of the Passion by the mystery which we celebrate."

"Every day," says St. Ambrose, "the Church commemorates the death of our divine Redeemer." The sacrifice, offered on the altar, is the same as that offered

* Ps., cx. 4.

on Mount Calvary. Let us be then present in spirit on Calvary, whilst bodily present at the foot of the altar. Yes, let us remember what Jesus Christ has done for us, and let this remembrance penetrate us with gratitude and love.

APPLICATION.

Let us proclaim the Holy Eucharist the master-piece of the hand of the Most High. Let us be filled with astonishment that the son of God gave us such testimony of his love, and let us return him thanks for it—above all by striving to enter into his view ?

Let us adore his most holy body present under the sacramental species. Let us honor the Church which this divine Master has so much honored ; let us rejoice it by cherishing among ourselves the most lovely, the most cordial, the most beneficent charity.

Let us remember Jesus Christ, his sweetness, his modesty, and his humility, and think that we ought to imitate him. Let us remember his death, and, according to the expression of the apostle, announce it by the practice of true mortification.

Let us give our hearts free scope in feelings of admiration, and exclaim : “ O Jesus, how useful and salutary have been thy designs in the institution of this sacrament : O sweet and delicious banquet in which thou hast given thyself to us to be our food : Oh ! how admirable are thy works, O Lord ! how great is thy power, how ineffable is thy truth ! ”

O sacred memorial ! O souvenir of the great sacrifice

with the Victim himself present, with his blood still springing forth and, as it were, issuing from his veins ! O monument of the love of Jesus ! Ah ! who could worthily praise you ! In instituting you, that divine Master has exhausted the treasures of his wisdom and power !

And yet there are men who do not love him, there are Religious whose hearts are as ice towards him. . . . Are we not of that number—we who meditate at this moment on the great miracle of his love ?

Ah ! let us bewail our indifference ; let us weep with regret at having hitherto so little loved the Emmanuel who has so loved us. Let us make him honorable amends for all our neglect of him, for all the outrages he receives in his divine sacrament, and let us to-day communicate with this intention in union with Mary, the reparatrix of the glory of her adorable Son. Let us implore him to grant us the grace of always acting according to the designs he had in instituting the holy Eucharist, and above all, let us ask for the grace of receiving him with all the dispositions of faith, purity of conscience, love, and humility, he desires to find in us.

PRAYER.

“O God who hast bequeathed to us in this admirable sacrament the memory of thy passion, grant that we may so venerate the sacred mysteries of thy body and blood, that we may always experience in our souls the fruits of the redemption thou hast wrought ! ”*

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 335.)

* Collect of the Holy Sacrament.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

DESIGNS OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST, IN REFERENCE TO US.

“I will not leave you orphans.” —St. John, xiv. 18.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS CHRIST who instituted the Holy Eucharist to glorify his heavenly Father, to honor his divine body, to give life to the Church, proposed to himself, also as an end to testify his love to us, to make himself our companion and comforter, to feed our souls, to remedy our evils, and to teach us the practice of all virtues.

That adorable Savior instituted his sacrament to show his love for us. Yes, it is a precious pledge of his affection, the work by excellence of his divine heart, showing that he loved man to excess. When about to die, he bequeaths to them all he has and all he is; he gives himself to them till the end of the world. Ah! can any proof of affection be imagined approaching to that, or in any way comparable to it?

Let us remember the love of Jesus Christ, says St. Chrysostom. Let us hear him say to us: “There are parents who give their children out to strangers to be

nursed ; but it is not so with me : I feed you with my flesh, and I bestow myself upon you."

He has concealed himself under the appearances of bread and wine to accommodate himself to our infirmity, to inspire us with confidence, to make himself accessible to all the faithful. The sacred species are to the new Moses the veil beneath which he conceals his radiant brow, and without which we could not look at him.

"Jesus Christ," says the apostle, "loved me and delivered himself for me."* Now, what he has done he continues. He is on our altars to renew his sacrifice, to cease not to immolate himself mystically for our salvation. Everything in this proclaims his love for us, and asks us to love him in return with all our hearts.

Jesus Christ instituted his sacrament that he might be our companion in the pilgrimage of this life. He did not wish to abandon us. "Behold," said he, "I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." He has given the Church triumphant his body in its splendor, and the Church militant the same body under the sacramental species.

Pilgrims on this land of exile, what a consolation it is to be with our sovereign ! He is in the midst of us ; he guides us in our course at times so perilous ; he is our viaticum through the whole period of its continuance, and more especially when it is about to end.

Jesus Christ is with us ; what a subject of joy ! We find in truth, in the Holy Eucharist, a kind of atonement for the privation of his visible presence. We do not

* Gal., ii. 20.

see him as he was formerly seen; but we know that he is there. Are we not as fortunate as those who have beheld him during his mortal life?

“ You envy,” says St. Chrysostom, “ the good fortune of the woman afflicted with a flux, who touched but the hem of his garment, and of the sinful woman who washed his feet with her tears. . . . You call those happy who saw him. . . . But you, my brethren, come to the altar: you will see him by faith, you will touch him, you will give him a holy kiss, you will carry him in you as Mary carried him!”

Ah! do you know, says he again, why our Savior instituted the Holy Eucharist? It was to change our exile into a paradise, and to make us find a heaven upon earth. Have we not with us him who makes the felicity of the elect in heaven?

Jesus Christ instituted the blessed Eucharist to be our spiritual food, to feed, as St. Thomas says,* the whole man, body and soul. He became a heavenly bread always present before the Lord to whom he is offered up, and always at hand to those who desire to feed on it. He is the manna given to the new people of Israel in the desert of life; and it is he, the Word of God, who has made himself this food of our souls, thus fulfilling these prophetic words: “ I was like a foster-father to Ephraim . . . and I put his meat to him that he might eat it.”† We receive him in our hearts, we unite with him in the most intimate union; and it is this above all he desired in regard to us.

* Hymn *Verbum Supernum.*

† Osee, ii. 3, 4.

Sacramental communion made with the requisite dispositions, is evidently the principal end that he proposed in the Holy Eucharist, for he chose as its first matter, bread and wine, the most ordinary nourishment of men ; he established it during a repast, and it does not operate in us as a sacrament but when we communicate really.

The Holy Eucharist which is our nourishment is also our remedy. "It is," says St. Thomas, "a medicinal nature, opposed to the venomous mortal fruit which was inoculated by our first parents into their unfortunate race."

From the day of the first sin, human nature has been afflicted with a thousand evils, the principal of which are pride, forgetfulness of God, weakness in opposing the passions, ignorance, degradation, death. But which of these evils does the Holy Eucharist not remedy ?

It destroys pride, by subjecting reason to faith, which alone teaches us the realities of this mystery.

It combats forgetfulness of God, for it is the memorial of all that he has done, and more than anything else recalls to us the thought of his holy presence.

It remedies our passions by the abundant graces of which it is the source; our ignorance, by communicating to us the clearest lights of faith ; our degraded nature, by sanctifying us, and if we may say so, making us divine. It consoles us under the necessity of dying, by being to us as a pledge of glorious resurrection, and by placing in us a germ of immortality, for Jesus Christ

hath said: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."*

That loving Savior takes also our infirmities on himself. From his tabernacle he does not cease to repeat: "Come to me all ye that labor and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you."†

He has also established the Holy Eucharist for us, to be in it the model of the virtues which we should practise. He is, in the blessed sacrament, concealed, and, as it were, annihilated, submissive to all, in the condition of a victim, adoring his Father unceasingly, and praying to him for us, patiently suffering neglect on the part of men, and even their contempt, loving us with a most ardent love in spite of our infidelities. . . . Ah! could he better teach us the practice of humility, obedience, piety, self-denial, patience, and charity?

APPLICATION.

Let us love Jesus, we above all who so frequently partake of the sacrament of his love. Let our hearts be all for him and for him alone! Let them have no motion or life but for that beloved Savior.

Let us frequently nourish ourselves with him; let us hasten to the divine banquet he has prepared for us; let us seek in the fervent reception of his adorable body the remedy for our spiritual evils.

Let us approach to the holy table with a consciousness of our necessities, saying with the author of the *Imitation*: "I come to you, O Lord, as one infirm to his

* St. John, vi. 52.

† St. Matt., xi. 28.

physician, as one needy to the King of heaven, as one in desolation to his lovely comforter."

Let us celebrate, with sentiments of the most lively faith and gratitude, the gift made to us. Let us say with the saints : " O admirable banquet in which Jesus Christ is received, the memory of his passion renewed, the soul filled with graces, and a pledge of happiness given us."* O heavenly table at which we eat the bread of angels, which nourishes our souls, sanctifies our hearts, heals our spiritual wounds, and procures for us everlasting life ! O nuptials of the Lamb in which Jesus unites himself to us, and transforms us into himself! . . . O my soul, desire then on earth only the Eucharist by which you possess the very treasure of heaven !

PRAYER.

I entreat thee, O Lord, by this august mystery of thy body and blood which every day nourishes us, purifies us, sanctifies us, and makes us partake of thy divinity, to give me the virtues for approaching thy holy table with a pure conscience, and that thus that divine sacrament may become my salvation and my life. †

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 335.)

* Anthem, *O Sacrum.*

† St. Anselm.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

LOVE OF JESUS TOWARDS US IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“You are my friends.”—St. John, xv. 14.

CONSIDERATION.

“THE sacrament of the altar,” says St. Thomas Aquinas, “is the expression of the greatest love God could give us.” Everything, in fact, speaks to us therein of the immense love of Jesus Christ towards men: the circumstances in which he instituted it, the sentiments which animated his divine heart, the excellence of the gift he has bestowed on us, his designs in instituting it, the state to which he is reduced;—everything therein reminds us of these words of St. John: “Jesus. . . having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”*

He loved men with a constant generous love which nothing could weaken; with a love which showed itself greatest at the very moment when he encountered the most hatred and ingratitude.

It was not when the people whom he had fed with a miraculous bread wanted to make him King, that the

* St. John, xiii. 1.

divine Savior instituted his sacrament; it was not on the day of his triumphal entrance into Jerusalem when the multitude received him with acclamations and blessings; but on the very night when he was going to be delivered up,* when the infamous Judas had already sold him, when the wicked synagogue was ordering his arrest, and preparing everything for his death, while his enemies were preparing the manacles, the scourges, the nails, the cross, all the instruments of his Passion. Yes, it was when the ingratitude of men towards him was at its height, that he favored them with the most signal of his favors.

How great then is his love for us! Why is it not given us to understand the sentiments of affection and tenderness that pierced his heart at the moment when he bequeathed to us that treasure of the Holy Eucharist, which is the testament of the new covenant? . . .

Ah! if a good father shows himself tender and affectionate, it is especially at the approach of death, when seeing his afflicted children bathed in tears standing around his bed of suffering, he thinks that he is soon to quit them. He regards them with inexpressible emotion, and while stretching out his feeble arm towards them, he says: "Dear children, come that I may embrace you for the last time." Then he presses them one by one to his heart, mingling his tears with theirs, blesses them, gives them his last counsels and the farewell kiss. Afterwards, having what is most valuable brought to him: "Take," says he, "the pledge of my tenderness,

* 1 Cor., xi. 23.

and after my death remember me, and the love I have had for you."

This, then, is but a very feeble image of what Jesus, the most loving of fathers, has done towards us.

Let us contemplate him surrounded by his apostles whom he is about to leave. His brow appears on that evening more calm, his eyes more beaming with love, his smile more winning, his face more radiant: "My dear children," says he to them, "with desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer."* And those words, says St. Lawrence Justinian, are like the sparks of the immense fire of love that enveloped and consumed his heart.

O Jesus, how great is thy affection for us! Thou sayest, I am dying of the desire to communicate myself to your souls: and you soon add, while presenting to us the consecrated bread and wine: "Take . . . this is my body. Drink . . . this is my blood."†

What, O Lord, thou givest thyself to us! Dost thou forget then what thou art and what we are?

If the holy Scripture extolled to the skies the clemency of David who twice spared the life of Saul, his enemy, how can we worthily praise the clemency of the divine Savior who made himself our inheritance, whom we have, alas! so often and so grievously offended?

Yes, his heart has an immense love for us, inexpressible and incomprehensible to the Seraphim themselves,—a love which made him generous to an extent we cannot conceive. Who loves much gives much; now, here

* St. Luke, xxii. 15.

† St. Matt., xxvi. 26, 28.

what is given us is infinite; the Author of that gift must then have loved us with an exceeding love.

St. Augustine teaches that God, who by his omnipotence can do all that he wills in heaven and on earth, can create a thousand worlds more beautiful, more admirable than this universe, cannot, however, give us a greater gift than that of the Holy Eucharist. "His wisdom," says he, "has found nothing more precious; and despite his infinite riches, this is the first of all his treasures, the one which in itself alone contains all."

And, in truth, exclaims St. Bernardine of Sienna, what other greater and more precious treasure can a soul conceive than the most holy body of Jesus? Does she not possess in him all good things? What more could he give us? Ah! could we have imagined such a mark of his love, would we then have ever dared to dwell on it in thought?

"Jesus Christ, in giving himself to us in the Holy Eucharist," says St. John Chrysostom, "gives us all the riches he has, and reserves nothing to himself." Let us then believe in his love, and never cease to extol its greatness.

And what other motive than that of Charity towards us inspired this divine Savior? For what end, after the glory of his Father, was the Holy Eucharist instituted, but for our interests? Jesus Christ wished to reside in the holy sacrament, to be our companion, our guide, our physician, our high priest, our food; to bring us out of our misery and place us with the princes of his people; to give such weak and miserable creatures the bread

of angels ! Does not his design, in establishing this wonder of wonders, tell us that he loved us with a boundless love ? The state to which he is reduced tells us so likewise.

It is for us he has concealed himself under the sacramental species, as it is for us he became man, and wished to labor, suffer, and die : it is for us that he is in the host or the Chalice. . . . Ah ! let us then measure, if we can, the extent to which he has annihilated himself, and let this teach us the extent of his charity. . . .

He who created the whole universe with a word, the God of Sinai, whose voice resounded like a peal of thunder, is here on our altars, silent, immovable, veiled under the accidents of bread and wine scarcely discernible to the eye ;—and he is here full of goodness, here he resides day and night waiting for us to come to him, calling us to his throne of clemency, inviting us, urging us, commanding us to assist at his divine banquet.

O immense, incomprehensible, infinite love ! A God gives himself entirely to us ! A God annihilates himself through love of his miserable creatures ! What matter for astonishment ! But, above all, what motive to love and glorify our divine Savior !

APPLICATION.

Let us with the saints recognize the love which Jesus Christ bears us, and let us proclaim it under all circumstances.

St. Bernard called Jesus Christ, at the holy altar, the “Love of loves.” St. Philip Neri said, at the moment

when they were bringing the viaticum to him : “Behold my love.” St. Magdalene, of Pazzi, called Holy Thursday the “day of love.” All have styled the Holy Eucharist by the name of the “Sacrament of love.” Let us imitate them.

Let us love Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament with the love of complacency. Let us think of the perfections of that infinitely amiable Savior who resides in the midst of us.

Let us love him with a love of gratitude. Ah ! when he has so much love for us and so much generosity, can we refuse him our hearts, or not give them wholly to him ? What ! Gifts that come from men please us, delight us—and can the gift which Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, has made of his whole being, leave us indifferent ! No, no, that is impossible ; we must love him who has so loved us, and repeat with St. Paul : “The charity of Christ presseth us ;” we must be all his, and forever, since he is all ours in time, and desires nothing more than to be ours also in eternity.

PRAYER.

Thou comest to me, O adorable Savior ! thou invitest me to thy divine banquet ; thou desirest to give me heavenly food, the bread of angels, which is no other than thyself ! O Jesus, be my only love. . . . No, I no longer belong to myself ; I am thine, wholly thine. Oh ! grant by thy grace that, to the last moment of my life, I may not be otherwise than a perfect victim of thy love !

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 336.)

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND THE INCARNATION.

“The word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”—

St. John, i. 14.

CONSIDERATION.

THE Holy Eucharist which is the memorial of all the works of God, is particularly so of the Incarnation of the Word—that prodigy of mercy by which the Eternal and immortal God became mortal, the immense became limited, he who is omnipotent became weak and liable to suffering.

What wonderful harmonies exist between those two mysteries !

In the Holy Eucharist, as in the Incarnation, it is the Son of God; it is God who humbles himself, comes to us, and, as it were, annihilates himself. In the one case, he assumes our nature and puts on the form of a servant; in the other, he conceals himself under the sacramental species where he conceals the rays of his glory.

His motives and ends were the same in the Incarnation and the Holy Eucharist.

The Word became Incarnate through love for his Father and compassion for us poor sinners, who could

not be saved but through him. He wished to glorify his Father, to adore him worthily by annihilating himself before him, to satisfy his justice by the oblation of his divine blood, to render him such thanks as his kindness merits, to beseech him to continue his favors towards us, and to heap them upon us. He wishes to dwell among us so as to raise fallen humanity, to replace it on the path from which it had strayed, to give it life, to make it, in some sense, partake of his divinity.

Now, is it not that he wishes to do and has done by the Holy Eucharist? What homage of adoration, thanksgiving, expiation, and supplication does he not offer to his Father on our altars, where he is the victim of the great sacrifice that must continue to the end of the world! How has he elevated man to whom he unites himself so intimately! Does he not place him higher than he stood before the original fall? Does he not in some sort deify him, by making him a participant in his adorable person; "for," says St. Leo, "by that sacrament he makes a passage in us from the human to the divine."

The Holy Eucharist, like the Incarnation, admirably manifests the power, wisdom, goodness, charity, humility, and zeal of our Savior God, who there annihilates himself for us, is hidden from our sight, and shows himself only to the eyes of faith.

In the Incarnation, we see only the humanity, and in the Holy Eucharist, only the sacramental species; and in the one and the other, we see only what is least.

In the Incarnation, the hypostatic union destroys the

human person, for in Jesus Christ, although there are two natures, there is only the person of God the Son. In the Holy Eucharist, the substance of bread and wine is destroyed, changed into the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ; and although it appears to our eyes as bread and wine, there is in reality neither bread nor wine, but the adorable body and blood of our divine Savior.

The Incarnation took place in an instant when Mary gave her consent. That Blessed Virgin was by that mystery elevated in an admirable degree above what she was before its accomplishment. Transubstantiation takes place in an instant at the words of the priest who, by the power of consecrating the body and blood of the Son of God, is raised, as St. Augustine remarks, to a supereminent dignity.

In Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, humanity alone was passible, suffering, wounded, and put to death, while the divinity remained always the same; in the Holy Eucharist, the species alone are broken and destroyed, while the body of our Savior suffers nothing of what affects them.

No created power could break the union of the Incarnation; in the same manner, no created power can dissolve the sacramental union of the body and blood of Jesus Christ with the species of bread and wine unchanged.

Such are the principal features of resemblance between the Holy Eucharist and the Incarnation: how closely they are allied to make us admire the great, the ineffable,

sacrament of our altars ! The same is true of the difference existing between these two mysteries. Let us recall to mind the principal differences, and understand what they make known to us of the excellence of the Holy Eucharist.

The Incarnation took place only once and in one place ; the Man-God was only on one place of the earth ; the hypostatic union existed only as to one object. Transubstantiation takes place constantly over the world, since the holy sacrifice is offered up at every instant ; like the Church, the Holy Eucharist, its treasure, is everywhere ; all the faithful are called to a union with Jesus Christ in the holy sacrament ; that divine Savior unites himself millions of times with our nature, by feeding us with his sacred flesh.

By the Holy Eucharist, he is very near to each of us, and dwells most especially with us : there is no one but can possess him personally.

By the Incarnation, it is human nature that is raised in dignity, united to God, deified ; by the Holy Eucharist, it is every one of the faithful who communicates. “ This sacrament,” says Monseigneur Landriot, “ continues in each Christian a sort of permanent Incarnation of the Son of God, in this sense that every day, by a miracle of love, the Son of God unites the nature of each of us to himself, makes each human nature his own, as formerly he united his most sacred humanity to himself.

“ The union is not as complete, it is not personal as in Jesus Christ, but it is nevertheless a living reality,

which the different ages of Christianity have rivalled each other in extolling. . . . As the body of Jesus Christ, says St Chrysostom, is united to the Word, so are we, by the Holy Eucharist, united to the sacred humanity of Christ."

Yes, it is with reason that the doctors of the Church have called the divine sacrament the extension of the Incarnation, for it continues it, renews it among us, enriches each of us with the graces of which it is the fruitful source as regards human nature. It makes every well-disposed Christian a participator of the honor and dignity with which God favored the holy Virgin on the day of the Incarnation of the Word.

What a favor is thus done to us ! God comes to us, gives himself to us. O ineffable goodness ! O depth of the humiliation to which his love has reduced him ! The Word became flesh when he made himself our Victim ; and this is the triumph and consummation of his infinite charity.

APPLICATION.

Let us not cease to admire the great mystery of the Holy Eucharist, and to bless the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, whose master-piece it is.

Let us have no soul, heart, mind, thoughts, sentiments, words, love, or relish, but for the Holy Eucharist. Let our whole being be only a continual expansion towards the God of love, who annihilates himself for us, by concealing himself under the accidents of the consecrated bread and wine.

Let us adore him in his sacrament, and unite our homage to that which the heavenly spirits who surround his altars pay to him. Let us acknowledge that the greatest of his blessings is to be united to him. What a grace to receive into our souls the God of heaven! what a grace to identify ourselves with him who, if we are well disposed, applies to us the infinite merits of his coming into the world.

Let us then carefully prepare ourselves for holy communion. Let us go to the holy table with sentiments of the most lively faith, the most entire hope, the most ardent charity, and the most profound humility, so that penetrated by the heavenly food given to us, we may become, according to the expression of St. Leo the Great, "the very flesh of him who became flesh."

Let us ardently desire to participate in the interior dispositions of the most Blessed Virgin, when the angel announced to her the union which was about to be contracted between her and the Word. We receive within us the same God who became incarnate in her womb;—should we not then be penetrated with the same sentiments that filled her heart?

Oh, what fruit we should derive from our communions, were our hearts really an image of that of Mary! How much reason we should have to say with her: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name."*

* St. Luke, i. 49.

PRAYER.

O Lord, I desire to receive thee with perfect devotion, with the same fervor, the same respect, the same gratitude, the same love, the same purity, with which thy holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received thee, when the mystery of the Incarnation was wrought in her! Make me, I beseech thee, a partaker in her dispositions, so that the holy communion I am going to make may glorify thee, and be to me a source of abundant graces, of sanctification and salvation.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 336.)

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

WHAT JESUS CHRIST IS FOR US IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“It is good for me to adhere to my God.”—Ps., lxxii. 28.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS CHRIST in his divine sacrament is our light, our hope, our guide, our nourishment, our repose, our joy. He is our friend, our shepherd, our king, our physician, our comforter, our life, and our strength. He is for us every thing that is blessed, good, sweet, and salutary.

Jesus Christ in his sacrament is our most faithful, most loving, most generous, most condescending friend; a friend sovereignly good, affable, sweet, and anticipating our wants. It is his love for us that makes him come down from heaven, that lowers his infinite greatness, that encloses him in the consecrated host, and keeps him prisoner under fragile species. O love, exclaimed a holy doctor, how strong are thy chains since they have power to bind and fetter a God!

Let us be filled with the same sentiments of admiration. Let us be astonished that Jesus Christ has so much love for us, who are so poor and miserable. Let us love

him then, and say to him with St. Augustine : "O Lord, who will give me to be able to repose in thee, who will grant me that thou wilt come into my heart and inebriate it with the delicious wine of thy love, so that I may lose the remembrance of all my miseries, and may embrace thee with all the powers of my soul as my sole and only good ?"

Jesus Christ in his divine sacrament is our shepherd, full of goodness and solicitude. From the tabernacle he speaks to his faithful sheep, and they hear his voice with joy. He knows them, he calls them by their names ; he guides them, he protects them, he encourages them ; he warms them within his arms and against his heart.

He leads them into good pastures. O prodigy of tenderness ! The nourishment he presents to them is his adorable flesh and blood, is himself ! . . . Let us bless his infinite generosity, and let us ask him that we may worthily partake of that divine food on this earth, so as to partake of it in heaven. Let us say to him with the Church : "O good shepherd, O true bread, Jesus, take pity on us, feed us, sustain us, make us enjoy the true good things in the land of the living !"^{*}

Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament is our king. He it is of whom it is written : "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion . . . behold thy king will come to thee, the Just and the Savior."[†] Yes, he is the new Solomon, the King of peace, the richest, greatest, and

* From the *Lauda Sion.*

† Zach., ix. 9.

most liberal of sovereigns. We can go to him at every hour, because he is always disposed to hear our requests. The tabernacle is his throne of love where he waits for us. Not only has he no guards to prevent access to him, but there always issues from it a voice that begs us, urges us to have recourse to him.

And as if that was not enough, he deigns to visit us himself; he comes to us, he abides with us, he takes delight in remaining with us, and enriches us with blessings by his presence. How much, then, ought we to love him and devote ourselves to procuring his glory!

Let us beseech him to grant us grace, and say to him : O Jesus, prince of peace, king of kings, reign in my heart, and subject it for ever to thy gentle sway ! O Lord, infinitely rich and liberal, grant that I may share in thy gifts ; but above all, grant me that of thy holy love !

Jesus Christ, in the blessed sacrament, is our physician, for he there heals all our diseases, and places on the wounds of our souls the balm which can alone cure them. All the miseries that afflict us come from this, that man has eaten the forbidden fruit, which has been for us the fruit of death, a mortal poison. Now, the antidote to this poison is the fruit of life which Jesus Christ presents to us, saying : “Take ye and eat.”*

Let us receive it from his hands, and feed ourselves on it with all the dispositions he requires of us. Let us communicate with fervor, and our souls will receive again in superabundance all their primitive vigor.

* St. Matt., xxvi. 26.

Jesus Christ, in his sacrament, is our consolation and our joy ; it was on that account he wished to remain in this abode of exile and tears, and on the very theatre of his sufferings. Let us understand this, and in imitation of St. Francis of Assisium, let us go in the midst of our sufferings to the foot of the altar to unburden our hearts in that of our heavenly friend ; we shall not return thence without having been consoled. There we shall call to mind what Jesus endured for us, the memorial of which is the adorable Eucharist, and then we shall see how small a thing it is that affects us ; there we shall hear in our hearts : “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?”* And we shall understand that it is by suffering that we must enter after him ; there he will give us his grace, the unction of which sweetens all the bitterness of the soul, and which, making us stronger than suffering, will lead us not only to feel resignation in our sufferings, but, following the example of St. Francis Xavier and St. Teresa, to desire to suffer still more for his love.

Jesus Christ, in the blessed sacrament, is our strength against the enemies of our salvation : ah ! how could we not triumph over their attacks by a worthy communion, since we then possess in our hearts the omnipotent God, the conqueror of death and hell !

Jesus Christ, in this sacrament, is our life : the life of our mind by the light with which he illuminates it ; the life of our heart, by the sentiments with which he animates it ; the life of our will, by the energy he com-

* St. Luke, xxiv. 26.

municates to it; the life of our senses, by the dominion he gives the soul to rule over them; the life of our body by the germ of a glorious resurrection he sows there, and which will develop at the great day of his last coming.

APPLICATION.

While meditating on what Jesus Christ is for us in his adorable sacrament, let us ask ourselves if our conduct testifies that we truly see in him our friend, our shepherd, our king, our physician, our comforter, our strength, our life.

Do we love the divine friend who has so loved us? Do we think on him? Do we speak of him? Do we forget ourselves, do we devote ourselves for him? Do we constantly seek to please him, and do we carefully avoid everything that could grieve him? Such are the effects of love towards that heavenly friend: perhaps, alas! on examining ourselves, we shall be obliged to confess that we love him but little, or do not love him at all.

Are we the docile sheep of the divine shepherd, doing his will, walking in his footsteps, avoiding the dangers of which he warns us, loving the fold of his Church, hearing his voice, feeding ourselves with the heavenly food he presents to us, striving to make ourselves worthy to come to the fold of heaven, where his obedient sheep will, through him, enjoy the repose that nothing will be able to disturb.

Are we faithful subjects of the divine king, keeping

exactly his holy law, observing it with joy, celebrating his greatness, imploring his goodness and munificence for ourselves and our neighbor ?

Do we have recourse to the divine physician to be healed of all our wounds ? In partaking at the holy table, have we the sentiments of that woman of whom the Gospel speaks, who making an effort to approach Jesus, said : “If I can only touch the hem of his garment, I shall be cured ?”*

Do we go to him as to our divine consoler ? When we are in suffering or tears, or tried by temptation, do we pour forth our souls at the foot of the tabernacle, and nourish ourselves with the sacred bread which changes our bitterness into sweetness, and renders the greatest and most painful sacrifices easy.

PRAYER.

“O thou, the Lord of all things, who having need of no one, didst wish to dwell in us by thy holy sacrament, preserve unspotted my soul and body, so that I may be able to participate more frequently at thy sacred banquet with joy and purity of conscience, and to receive for my eternal salvation that which thou hast ordained and instituted, chiefly for thine own glory and in perpetual remembrance of thy favors.”†

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 337.)

* St. Matt., ix. 21.

† Imit., book iv., ch. ii., 5.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN.

“Come eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you.”—Prov., ix. 5.

CONSIDERATION.

WHAT an admirable subject for meditation is Mary, considered in her relations to the Holy Eucharist! What more consoling to the Christian soul, and more calculated to excite in us devotion towards the august sacrament of our altars!

And, in truth, the Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus Christ: now that body and that blood came from Mary, as the Church reminds us by these words: “He was given to us, for us he was born of a spotless Virgin,” * and by these others: “Hail, O true body, born of the Virgin Mary, and which for man was sacrificed upon the cross.” †

Yes, if the Holy Eucharist is the living water which satisfies our thirst, Mary is its fountain. If the Holy Eucharist is the wine that strengthens and rejoices us, Mary is the vine from which it comes. If the Holy

* Hymn, *Pange Lingua*.

† Hymn *Ave verum*.

Eucharist is the wheat that feeds us, Mary is the stalk that bore it.

Consider, I beseech you, says St. Peter Damian, how we are indebted to the blessed Mother of God, and what thanks we owe her, since we receive at the altar the same body that she brought forth, that she wrapped in swaddling clothes and brought up with so much care! No, there is no tongue that can worthily praise her who thus feeds our souls with her purest substance; there is no heart that can love her as she deserves.

It was from Mary that the divine flesh which is presented to us in the Holy Eucharist originally sprung. Therefore, the Fathers place in the mouth of this most holy Virgin these words of the book of Proverbs, which they understand of the blessed sacrament: "Come eat my bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you." Yes, it is she who furnished Jesus that bread of pure wheat, that wine of his chalice; and thus it is the flesh and blood of Mary, made divine by their union with the Word, that are the nourishment of our souls.

Mary is called by St. Epiphanius, "the priest and the altar which give us the heavenly bread for the forgiveness of our daily sins."

Mary is also the first determining motive for the sacrament of the Eucharist, in this sense that, independently of every other end, Jesus Christ must have his most holy Mother specially in view when instituting this sacrament.

He wished to remain among us for the benefit and consolation of his elect; but Mary is the first among the

elect that forms a separate order above the angels and saints: it was, then, particularly on her account that he resolved to remain among men. He wished to console her for his sensible absence by making her enjoy his sacramental presence, until the day when he would call her to reign with him. He wished to testify his gratitude towards her in an ineffable way, and to give her here below what he had received from her,—his body and blood. He wished to become the food of her who had fed him. . . .

May glory then be given to this sinless Virgin through whom Jesus came to us, and for whom that God of love perpetuated his presence among men.

Let us celebrate her praises; but above all, let us imitate her, for she is a perfect model of all our duties in reference to the Holy Eucharist.

Who can imagine with what piety and fervor she visited her adorable Son in the Holy Eucharist! What passed then in her heart when her faith showed her, under the veils of the sacred species, Him whom she had carried in her womb, given birth to in a stable at Bethlehem, accompanied during his whole life, beheld dying on the cross, and three days after risen again radiant with glory?

Who can imagine with what piety and fervor she assisted at the great sacrifice of the altar? The mystical sacrifice of Jesus Christ brought the bloody sacrifice of Calvary present to her mind. She was at the foot of the altar, as at the foot of the cross, perfectly united to the adorable Victim of our salvation, and rendering, through

him, a worthy homage of praise, thanksgiving, reparation, and prayer to the heavenly Father.

Who can conceive with what piety and fervor she received her divine Son in the holy communion? The Holy Eucharist was her daily bread. Every day she approached the sacred table where Jesus gave himself to her. Oh, what were then the dispositions of her soul! She pressed him once more to her maternal breast. . . . The heavenly joys of the Incarnation, the Nativity, the Presentation, were renewed in her. Her faith made the presence of her beloved Son, as it were, visible to her; she felt the heart of her adorable Son beat close to hers, and communicate to it its divine fires.

Yes, she recognized Jesus at the breaking of bread; she adored, blessed him, was lost in him through sentiments of the most lively tenderness.

O Mary, how happy you are! You enjoy in the Holy Eucharist the presence of your beloved Son. He is once more in your arms and you say to him: "You are flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones." O tender and good Mother, taste and see how good the Lord is, but obtain for us that we may share to some extent in the same favor!

Mary is a means by which we may fulfill our duties towards the Holy Eucharist. She is such, not only by her example which is so calculated to exercise a salutary influence over us and to make us devout towards the holy sacrament, but also by her protection and the efficaciousness of her worship.

Mary desires nothing more than to see us united as

perfectly as possible to Jesus in the sacrament of his love; she wishes only the glory of her divine Son and our salvation, and she knows that nothing more contributes to it than a communion well made. There is, consequently, no doubt that she feels an interest in our regard when we are preparing to approach the holy table, and that she obtains for us the graces necessary to perform that action worthily, to which no other in our lives can be compared.

Let us add, that devotion to Mary leads naturally to devotion to the Holy Eucharist; that true devotion to the mother of Jesus can only end in devotion to Jesus himself present in the midst of us. This is a fact of experience: whoever goes with his whole heart to Mary goes thereby to her Son, and receives from the hands of the new Eve the fruit of life and salvation which she, by her coöperation, has given to the earth.

Happy, then, are the pure servants of Mary: they cannot fail to be wholly devoted to the adorable sacrament, and to receive therein, in superabundance, the most precious graces.

APPLICATION.

Let us be grateful to the most Blessed Virgin, in regard to the Holy Eucharist: "for," says St. Peter Damian, "if Eve presented us a fruit which excluded us from the everlasting banquet, Mary has given us a food that has again opened the gates of heaven to us."

Let us unite with Mary in rendering our homage of adoration and thanksgiving to Jesus in the most holy sacrament: oh! how agreeable will this be to him, and what blessings he will be pleased to shower upon us!

Let us often reflect with what dispositions Mary contemplated the adorable Eucharist, assisted at the holy sacrifice, and partook of the divine Victim ; and let us do all in our power to make her dispositions ours.

Let us for that purpose have recourse to Mary herself, and let us beg her to help us with her protection, so that we may render a worthy homage to Jesus, our Victim.

Let us pray to her with fervor when we propose to approach holy communion. Let us beg her to prepare our hearts, to communicate to them some sparks of the divine love with which her own was on fire, so that the sacrament we are about to receive may be truly our consolation, our strength, our life, and our salvation.

PRAYER.

“Be thou blessed, O holy Virgin, through whom we receive the heavenly bread that preserves and increases true life within us.”*

Through thee Jesus comes to me. Oh, grant that through thee I may truly go to him ! Communicate to my poor heart the divine fires with which thine was inflamed towards him. O my loving Mother, teach me and help me to adore him, praise him, love him, and please him : obtain for me that I may receive him with fervor in the holy communion, retain him in my soul, and unite myself to him so intimately that nothing shall be able to break or weaken that union !

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 337.)

* Little Office of the Blessed Virgin.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND THE ANGELS.

“And let all the angels of God adore him.”—Heb., 1, 6.

CONSIDERATION.

OVER the Ark of the Covenant, Moses had two cherubim represented, with outstretched wings, their faces towards each other, their heads bent towards the propitiatory which they seemed to look upon with love.

Now, that was only a symbol of what takes place in our churches where the angels of God surround the holy tabernacle, bend towards the divine Prisoner, pay him with the tribute of their profound adorations the homage of their ardent love, and are thus admirable models to us, as well as powerful auxiliaries in our performance of our duties towards the Holy Eucharist.

“ And where is the Christian,” says St. Gregory the Great, “ who can doubt that at the words of the priest the heavens open, that the choirs of angels assist at the sacred mysteries to pay their court to Jesus Christ, that there is established an intercourse between heaven and earth, between the things above and the things beneath, that an ineffable union of the visible with the invisible takes place ? ”

"The angels," says St. Leo, "venerate the body of our Lord, and protect the faithful who are there present." Frequently they have appeared in a sensible manner to favored souls. St. Nilus, speaking of St. John Chrysostom, says: "That admirable bishop, the glory of the whole universe, saw almost continually the house of God filled with choirs of angels, but above all where he offered up the divine sacrifice ; and he could not, in his private conversation, dissemble his admiration and joy on this subject."

We see by this why this eloquent bishop frequently reminds the faithful that the angels adore and love the hidden God :—

"When," says he, "the sacrifice is offered, heaven opens and the angels descend. Yes, behold the celestial spirits present in the sanctuary, where they sing hymns in honor of the great king enthroned upon the altar. The angels are there prostrate before our common Lord, archangels are there who profit by the moment of offering, to address their prayers to him.

"Oh ! do not allow your thoughts to wander upon earth. See what companions you have in your prayers ; let it suffice to keep you recollect to reflect, that though composed of flesh and bone, you are admitted into the society of the heavenly spirits to sing for ever the praises of our universal master."

With this holy doctor let us rejoice at the thought of the worship, adoration, and love, which the angelic hosts offer up to God with us—homages which counterpoise the indifference and contempt of which the divine sacra-

ment is the object on the part of so great a number of mankind.

Let us desire with all our souls to render him like homage. Let us say with St. Alphonsus Liguori : "O heavenly intelligences, which, all on fire with love, continue near the divine Savior, inflame me with the same fire ! Yes, let my heart be like yours, glowing with divine love !

"O blessed Seraphim, spirits on fire with pure charity ! no, it is not your glory I envy, but the love with which you burn for him who is my God and your God. Oh, come from heaven to teach me to love him and please him !"

Thus, we see that the angels are our intercessors with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. They have all power over his heart and love us : ah ! how could they but pray for us ? Do they not know what is, on the one side, our spiritual indigence, and on the other, what treasures the adorable sacrament contains ?

Yes, they make it their happiness to pray for the faithful. Thus the tabernacle is truly the summit of the mysterious ladder which the patriarch Jacob saw in a sleep, and on which angels continually ascended and descended ; it is at the tabernacle that they present our prayers to God who resides there, and it is from thence they return to us with the graces they have obtained.

It is also the office of those blessed spirits to propagate and revive devotion to the Holy Eucharist in our hearts. What a subject of joy, and what a motive for confidence ! Formerly, the Cherubim with fiery swords

guarded the approach to the tree of life ; and now the whole heavenly court invites us to partake of it.

Ah ! how many times has our good angel said to us by his inspirations, these words spoken to Elias : " Arise, take and eat." How great assistance he renders us in our preparation for communion and our thanksgiving ! It is he who makes us yearn for the bread of angels, and think beforehand of the great action we propose to do. He shows our soul the tabernacle where our Lord awaits us, and he reminds us with what dispositions we ought to approach it. The moment being come, he accompanies us to the holy table, and inviting us to unite with him, he adores and blesses the God who gives himself to us. He makes us call to mind, afterwards during the day, the favor granted us in the morning, and helps us to preserve the fruits of it.

Such services, so precious and salutary, all the angels are busy rendering to the faithful to whom they are sent, and nothing causes them more satisfaction than when their words are listened to, and hearts bow to their sweet influence.

While meditating on these consoling thoughts, let us give glory to those blessed spirits, who live only for the God of love, who became our companion and food ; and let us exclaim in sentiments of admiration and gratitude : " Be ye blessed, angels of God, heavenly messengers, for your solicitude in our regard. You will feed yourselves in a different manner from us with that bread given us, and you will relish its infinite sweetness. Assist us then, we beseech you, to prepare our hearts

for holy communion, so that we too may be able to experience that the Lord is sweet to those who receive him with piety, and that he forms, even in this life, the consolation of the faithful soul whilst waiting to make its supreme happiness in eternity!"

APPLICATION.

In union with the heavenly spirits, let us profoundly adore the divine Victim sacrificing himself upon our altars, or present in our tabernacles. Like them, let us keep ourselves humbled before that sovereign Majesty who shows himself so humbled for love of us.

Like them, let us love with the deepest love the adorable Emmanuel. Let us make but one with them to adore him, bless him, and love him. Let us say to them with a pious author : * "Angels of God who burn with an incomprehensible and eternal love for Jesus, and the love of whom makes your happiness and glory, lend me your fire of love, associate me in your acts of adoration. You adore and love without interruption : ah ! when shall I be able to adore and love like you ? Let us ask of God, through their intercession, the propagation and renewal of devotion towards the adorable Eucharist. Let us do, on our part, with a view to the realization of that end, all that we can do, remembering that we are, in regard to our pupils, as angels sent to prepare in their hearts the way for Jesus Christ. Oh ! how sublime a mystery is this, and full of consolation !

* Père Avrillon.

Let us understand it, and acquit ourselves of this duty with the most entire devotedness.

As Religious, let us belong wholly to the God of the Eucharist, and show him this by our conduct. Ah! above all, let us prepare ourselves carefully for holy communion.

Let us purify our conscience, rekindle our fervor; let us ask for this purpose the assistance of our good angel; let us beg him to prepare our heart, so that Jesus may be pleased with us and enrich us with all the treasures of his grace.

PRAYER.

“The bread of angels becomes the bread of men.”* I am going to receive my God as my food, I so poor and miserable:—ah! would that I had your holiness and love, O my good angel guardian!

O my heavenly protector, supply for my poverty! Behold my heart; kindle it with your fires; grant that I may love, like you and through you, my divine Savior; and that as the fruit of this communion, I may obtain from his goodness the grace to love him more and more, until the day when with you I shall feed on this divine bread in heaven.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 338.)

* Hymn, *Sacris solemniiis*.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND THE CHURCH.

“Neither is there any other nation so great that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions.”—Deut., v. 7.

CONSIDERATION.

THE Holy Eucharist is the life, the glory, the strength, the joy, the treasure of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Formed on Calvary by the effusion of the blood of God, the Church is preserved by the mystical effusion of that same blood on the altar. Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist is its life, its condition of existence, the source of all the good it works. His presence is for it what the presence of the sun above the horizon is for the earth: from his sacred body, streams of light, heat, and imperishable life, incessantly radiate, which everywhere produce the most admirable wonders.

Devotion to the Holy Eucharist gives life to other devotions. It is their beginning and their end. It is from it they spring, it is in it they end. It is, in their regard, what the ocean is to rivers whose sources it feeds, and whose waters it at last receives.

Devotion to the Holy Eucharist excites, keeps alive, develops in the heart the noblest and the most heroic

sentiments. "O what fruits of virtue," says St. Liguori on this subject, "do those blessed souls whom love retains near his holy altars render, like new plants, to God!"

Yes, they bear fruits of piety, purity, justice, and charity! They are burning and luminous torches, or rather lamps burning before the holy tabernacle, where they burn with love for him who is enclosed there, and who is the sole object all of their affections.

It is from the divine Eucharist that the ministers of the Church and the pious faithful, draw their inspiration and the strength to do the good they perform: "This mystery," as a learned prelate has written, "is the heart of Christianity." *

It is also the greatest glory of the Church; and, in truth, what glory is comparable to that of possessing God personally, of being in the strictest intimacy with him, of communicating unceasingly with that Sovereign Majesty, of even commanding him in one sense! Now is not that the privilege of the Church? What an honor! Does it not infinitely surpass that which could redound to us from the intimacy or favor of the greatest on earth.

If the Jewish people boasted of being the first of nations because they possessed the holy ark, how much more reason have Christians to boast? Do we not possess the reality of what the synagogue possessed only in figure? The Church has in her midst the divine legislator, the manna, the eternal priest, the Messiah promised

* Monseigneur Gerbet.

to Abraham. . . . She has authority over the Lord himself, who at the voice of her ordained ministers, becomes present under the appearances of bread and wine.

How can we think of the singular honor God has done her without congratulating her on her prerogatives, and saying to her: “Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God?”* Thou art the tabernacle of the Lord. He resides in thy sanctuaries, and makes thee resplendent with his very divinity. Ah! bless him and celebrate his everlasting favors.

The Holy Eucharist is the strength, the defence of the Church: it closely unites the faithful who are members of that glorious society; it prevents or puts an end to divisions. Jesus Christ is in his holy tabernacle what he was in the boat on the lake of Tiberius. Sometimes, when the storms of hell are unloosed, and the waves of impiety rage furiously, he seems to sleep: but soon, at the prayers of the faithful, he commands the winds and the sea—and there is a great calm.

No, no, the ship of Peter can never be submerged: the Holy Eucharist is the anchor which stays it, and makes it stronger than all the tempests raised by the enemies of religion.

This sacrament is still the strength of the Church by its effects on those who receive it. How powerful it makes them against their passions, the world, and the devil! Let us call to mind those martyrs of every age, sex, and condition, who have supported with invincible

* Ps., lxxxvi. 3.

fortitude torments the very idea of which makes us tremble. They were nourished with the bread of the strong, and therefore they were able to weary out the cruelty of the executioners, and to exclaim from the top of racks or the midst of flames : "Nothing shall be able to separate me from the love of Jesus Christ."*

From the same source proceed all the other prodigies of virtue done in the Church. Let us ask, for instance, those who renounce the world to consecrate themselves to the service of their neighbor, what inspires them with the superhuman charity that possesses their hearts, and they will all answer: "It is the Holy Eucharist; it is the reception of him who came down from heaven to take upon him our infirmities and dry our tears."

That adorable sacrament is the consolation and the joy of the Church. In her sorrows, she finds in the holy tabernacle a heart that understands and shares them. She contemplates what she possesses, and sees that it is he who makes the happiness of the elect. Her children taste true happiness at the foot of the altar, and can express the accents of a soul ravished out of itself by graces received from Jesus in the adorable sacrament, saying: "O sacrament of love ! O inebriating fountain at which my thirsty lips drank, in long draughts, a foretaste of eternal life! . . . When I think of thee, my heart overflows with joy, it feels that it must bless thee and celebrate thy praises in hymns of joy and thanksgiving." †

The divine sacrament of the Eucharist is the

* Rom., viii. 39.

† Père Hermann.

treasure of the Church. Oh ! what a blessing it has, in possessing the Author of all blessings ! Abundance reigns in her granaries, her cellars are filled ; she can, as she does, prepare everywhere on earth the table of the divine banquet, and invite her children to it. By the adorable Victim whom she offers up unceasingly to the Father, she has the freest access to him, and obtains infinite treasures of grace for all men.

Devoted children of the holy Church, what reason we have to unite with her in celebrating the munificence of Jesus Christ in her regard, and blessing him for the inestimable gift he has bestowed upon it !

APPLICATION.

The Holy Eucharist is everything for the Church : therefore, that loving mother unceasingly proclaims its dignity, and with love and joy pays it the worship due to it, making it known, loved, and adored everywhere, leading men by her ceremonies, her pomp, her hymns, and her prayers, to venerate and love it with all their minds and hearts. Ah ! let the Holy Eucharist be, then, everything for us ! Yes, let us live by the Holy Eucharist and for it ; let us have no thought, will, sentiment, nor taste, but for Jesus present in the midst of us and giving himself to us.

Let us appreciate our happiness in possessing it, and uniting ourselves to it. What an honor it does us, miserable sinners ! Oh, how can we think of it and not shed tears of gratitude and love !

Let us have recourse to it in all circumstances, and

particularly in our moments of trial. When the storm of temptations threatens to submerge us, let us go to him who by a word can still the winds and the waves. Let us draw from frequent and fervent communions, holy attendance at mass, and visits to the holy sacrament, the strength to resist all the allurements of evil.

Let us despise worldly joys; let us esteem and seek only the pure pleasures of which the Holy Eucharist is the source. Let that adorable sacrament be the object of all our desires. Let us aspire unceasingly to that happy moment when we can sit down at the divine banquet, and prepare our hearts with care that the divine food which the Church presents to us, may be truly our life and and our salvation.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, who hast given thyself to thy Church by the sacrament of love! be thou for ever blessed for that ineffable banquet in which, in spite of my unworthiness, I am invited to participate. Thou art everything to that loving mother; ah! be also all to me. Grant that, by thy grace, I may live by thee and for thee all the days of my exile here below, and thus I may come to enjoy thee in the heavenly country.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 338.)

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND THE SAINTS.

“With the holy, thou wilt be holy.”—Ps., xvii. 26.

CONSIDERATION.

How admirable was the devotion of the saints to the Holy Eucharist! By their faith they beheld Jesus, their Lord and their God, present in the holy sacrament, Jesus who alone was everything to them; and their hearts always kept close beside him, according to these words which he himself uttered: “For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.”*

The mystery of God with us ravished them out of themselves; their minds could not be satisfied contemplating this miracle of Jesus Christ residing in the midst of his people, and giving himself to us; their sweetest and, if we may say so, their only consolation was to visit the blessed sacrament, to assist at mass, and to receive holy communion. They appeared in the church like angels come down from heaven, their whole demeanor while there was an eloquent lesson: at sight of them, it was impossible not to adore and love with them the hidden God.

* St. Matt., vi. 21.

How many instances attest their devotion to the Holy Eucharist ! St. Aloysius Gonzaga remained in the church as long as obedience left him free to do so ; St. Magdalene of Pazzi made every day thirty visits to the blessed sacrament ; St. Francis Xavier and St. John Francis Regis often passed whole nights before the altar, thus reposing on the heart of Jesus the fatigues of their laborious apostolate. . . .

How many examples of the same nature are presented by the lives of St. Francis of Assisium, St. Louis, king of France, St. Teresa, St. Philip Neri, St. Francis of Sales, and St. Liguori ! . . .

What a love the saints had for holy communion ! The bread of angels had invincible attractions for them. They sighed unceasingly for that heavenly food. To be deprived of it was their greatest suffering. By their dispositions, they repeated these words of the blessed Margaret Mary : “ Amiable Jesus, I wish to die through love of you ; and not being able to receive you as often as I wish, I shall not cease to sigh for you with all the ardor of my soul.” Like thirsty deer, they ran panting towards the fountain of life.

With what fervor they approached the divine sacrament ! They prepared themselves to receive it with the greatest care, purifying their conscience from every sin, and kindling in their heart the liveliest sentiments of humility, adoration, and love.

But who can tell what passed in their souls at the very moment of communion, when they made but one with the adorable Emmanuel ? What holy fire he com-

municated to them; and, consequently, what flames of love issued from their hearts towards the heart of their divine guest!

After communion, they remained a long time in prayer. They passed the rest of the day in retirement, remembering the favor they had received, and returning their Lord continual thanks.

The saints were the apostles of devotion to the Holy Eucharist. Oh! with what fervor did they endeavor to propagate and revive it! With what love they proclaimed its dignity and efficacy! With what zeal they invited people to sit down at the divine banquet, saying to them, as did St. John Chrysostom: "Approach the holy table and your hunger and thirst will be appeased; your minds will be enlightened, and the wounds of your souls healed, for there is the heavenly bread, the divine fountain, the true light."

Nothing so filled them with joy as to see the faithful crowd to the holy table, while nothing caused them more pain than the sight of the indifference or contempt of men in reference to the bread of heaven. Their souls were torn with grief, like the blessed Margaret Mary's, at the thought that Jesus is so little loved in his holy sacrament, so little longed for: or, like St. Magdalene of Pazzi, they exclaimed, "Alas! love is not loved."

It is thus, O Lord, that your saints who rejoice with you in glory lived only for you here below. How agreeable their piety was to you, and what a source of spiritual treasure it was to themselves! They found, in

the Holy Eucharist, strength, light, and joy! "What streams of grace," says St. Liguori, "they have at all times drawn from that sacred fountain where Jesus Christ dispenses to us the infinite merit of his passion."

And here let us recall to mind the martyrs. Whence came their superhuman courage but from the supernatural food on which they fed?

St. John Chrysostom says that the confessors of the faith, when leaving the holy table, were like lions breathing the sacred fire which consumed them interiorly. "Whence comes, O Laurence!" says St. Ambrose, "that inexplicable courage which makes you insensible to the fire which devours you? Ah! it was because you had first drunk the divine blood you were accustomed to distribute to the faithful."

St. Augustine speaks in the same spirit: "See," says he, "the beloved disciple who enters into the boiling oil! Whence comes his strength?—from the cup he had drunk of at the last supper. See St. Andrew who embraces his cross! Whence cometh that joy?—from the blood of the Lamb which he offered up every day. See that victorious troop of saints who tire the cruelties of the executioners by the firmness of their courage! What is it that infuses into all of them this invincible generosity, but the mysterious wine that makes martyrs, as well as virgins, become spouses of Jesus?"

By the efficacy of the Holy Eucharist, the saints were carried by love towards all that is most generous in faith, most rigorous in penance, most severe in mortification, most repulsive in humility and the service of our

neighbor: they wished to render Jesus body for body, and soul for soul.

The Holy Eucharist was to them a source of inexpressible joys. They knew the Lord in the breaking of bread, and their hearts throbbed with the sweetest delight. What joy they experienced in communion! How many of them were then transported out of themselves, as if their souls had left the body to be more closely united to their beloved Savior!

They felt, as St. Francis of Sales says, that Jesus was present everywhere, righting every thing, purifying every thing, vivifying every thing, loving through their hearts, speaking through their tongues, hearing through their ears, animating every thing with his heavenly life!

Behold what the saints were towards the Holy Eucharist, and what the Holy Eucharist was towards them: why could it not be so with us children of the saints, who devote ourselves to be their imitators?

APPLICATION.

Like the saints, let us strive to grow in devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and let us be filled with zeal to make the souls confided to us embrace the salutary practices belonging to that devotion.

Let us assist at mass and visit the blessed sacrament as they did.

Let us love holy communion above all; let us hunger for the bread of heaven, and devoutly feed ourselves with it as often as possible.

Let us go to the Holy Eucharist to draw thence the

strength we need to triumph over the enemies of our salvation, to surmount the difficulties of our state to persevere in the service of God, to bear with courage till the close of life the burden and heat of the day.

Let us pray the saints to help us by their protection, so that all our communions may be made with all the requisite dispositions, and may obtain for us the most precious graces of sanctification and salvation.

Let us seek our consolation in the holy tabernacle, remembering that it is the vestibule of heaven. Let us repose in him who resides there and who is our joy here below, whilst waiting for the day when he will constitute our supreme felicity in heaven.

PRAYER.

“When I call to mind, O my God ! with what devotion and what ardor the saints approached thy holy sacrament, I am confounded and blush at my own luke-warmness. I blush not to be all on fire in thy presence, and not to feel their attraction towards thee and their transports of love.”*

O my God ! eternal love and my only good, grant that I may be one of the number of those souls whom I admire ! I offer to thee their dispositions, and beg of thee to make me a partaker of them, so that I also may draw strength, light, and consolation from the Eucharistic banquet ; and that being filled with the grace of the sacrament, I may attain to the happiness of thy saints !

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 339.)

* Imit., book iv., ch. xiv. 1.

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND THE VENERABLE DE LA SALLE.

“For to me, to live is Christ.”—Philipp., i. 21.

CONSIDERATION.

GOD has given us in our Venerable Father a model, and an admirable guide in our devotion to the Holy Eucharist.

His attraction towards the sacrament of the altar was evinced in his most tender years, and never ceased to increase even to the end of his career. While a child, he was happy only at the foot of the altar, in presence of the tabernacle where he dwells who destined him to be one day his minister and the instrument of his providence for the sanctification of many souls. Nothing gave him more pleasure than to pray in the church, or to witness the splendid ceremonies of religion.

While a youth, he kept his heart faithfully preserved for him to whom he had consecrated it in his boyhood, and he drew the strength and courage necessary for this from frequent communion and repeated visits to the holy sacrament.

Being called to the sublime dignity of the priesthood, he prepared himself for it by devoting himself unreservedly to the worship of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. How often did this young levite contemplate, in an ecstacy of admiration, the sacred host exposed to the eyes of the faithful, and allow his soul to break forth in fervent prayers of adoration, thanksgiving, and love! How he studied to perfect himself from day to day, so as to draw on himself the most abundant blessings of heaven, and to receive in his ordination the fulness of the sacerdotal spirit!

The day came when he himself was to offer up the holy sacrifice. With what joy, fervor, and recollection, he said his first mass! He appeared in the eyes of the assistants rather an angel than a man. . . .

These dispositions did not diminish in him. Wher- ever he offered up the holy sacrifice, he was the edification of the faithful. He was distinguished particularly by his piety at the altar. The mere sight of him awakened in others the sentiments of faith, respect, and adoration, with which he was himself penetrated.

Always hungry for the bread of life, he nourished himself with it every day. If it happened through his infirmities or journeys that he could not celebrate the holy sacrifice, it caused him the greatest pain. He appreciated, more than anything else, the heavenly food which was his strength, his consolation, and his life. His whole conduct testified his devotion towards the adorable sacrament.

He never ascended the altar without having piously

prepared himself for it. His mass being over, he spent a considerable time in thanksgiving, during which his mind and heart were all absorbed in God, whom he had offered up as a victim and with whom he was nourished.

He wished that everything used in the divine worship should be becoming, rich, even magnificent: with what joy and what zeal did he devote himself on feast days to the decoration of the altar!

His particular delight was to visit the blessed sacrament; and to this he consecrated, if we may say so, all the time that his duties left free. In all his difficulties he had recourse to the holy tabernacle to receive thence the necessary lights, and to pour forth his heart into the heart of his divine Master. It was from that he drew the courage with which he was always animated, and which enabled him to surmount so many obstacles, and conduct to its end the difficult work which Providence had entrusted to him.

There it was that his soul found rest, and received those signal graces by which it advanced so far on the path to perfection.

To love for holy communion and visits to the blessed sacrament, he joined the particularly ardent zeal to diffuse and revive a devotion to the Holy Eucharist. He wished that such devotion should be particularly dear to his disciples, and that, in teaching, they should endeavor to inspire it into their pupils.

He warmly exhorted those under him to frequent, but at the same time, fervent communion; he excited the timid and encouraged the weak, while he reproached

the lukewarm with their tepidity—the true cause of their little relish for the bread of angels.

How remarkable and worthy of being meditated upon are his maxims regarding holy communion ! Let us recall to mind the principal of them.

“The fruits of holy communion,” says he, in the *Recueil*, “depend very much on the dispositions with which it is made. To dispose your heart such as it ought to be, ask yourself:—What am I going to do ? What am I compared to God who gives himself to me ? For what general and what particular end am I going to communicate to-day ? . . . Approach the holy table with the dispositions you would wish to have to enter into heaven, for we should not have less respect in receiving Jesus Christ, than we should wish to have when received by him.

“The frequency of communions is not what diminishes their fervor. On the contrary, there is no better preparation for communion than to make the one before it with all the requisite dispositions. That sacrament, if we do not resist the graces received in it, fills us without taking away our appetite, without weakening our desire for communion, as the sight of God in heaven contents the blessed without diminishing their desire of still seeing him.

“Believe that there is not any time so precious in life as that of communion, when you have the happiness of speaking, mouth to mouth and heart to heart, with Jesus Christ.

“Call to mind at that moment all that appears to you

most difficult in the service of God, and animate yourself to conquer it for the love of Jesus Christ who gives himself wholly to you. Leave yourself in his hands, so as to enter into his designs regarding you, and to execute them. Ask, then, especially and with urgency, the graces of which you have need : since you possess your Lord he will not refuse you any thing you ask of him."

Behold what were the sentiments of our Venerable Father : let us remember his example and instructions, and in our conduct conform ourselves exactly to them, both as Religious and teachers.

APPLICATION.

Let us bless God for having given us such a guide, and let us show that we truly possess his spirit. In imitation of him, let the Holy Eucharist be our world, our all, and let our hearts burn with the fire with which his was consumed.

Let us be very modest and respectful in the Church, religiously keeping silence there, with our eyes cast down or fixed on some object of devotion, avoiding glances of curiosity to one side or the other, and being careful to frequently renew the thought of the presence of God, and the respect the angels show to his adorable Majesty.

Let us assist at mass with the most lively faith and the most loving piety, while uniting in the dispositions of Jesus Christ, the Victim offered up for the glory of his Father.

Let us love holy communion, and receive it at least as often as our rules prescribe. Let us each time care-

fully prepare ourselves for it, so as to draw from it numberless fruits of holiness and sanctity. Let us devote ourselves heart and soul, to penetrate the minds of our pupils with devotion to the Holy Eucharist: what other end can be more worthy of our efforts? Is it not the greatest service we could render to our pupils?

Let us in all circumstances have recourse to this divine sacrament: let us lay before Jesus our sufferings, our sorrows, and our fears, and let us ask the assistance of his grace. How much *ennui*, or discouragement, we might thus prevent or dispel!

In union with our Venerable Father, let us often pray, more especially in Thursday's communion, for our Institute and our community. Let us beseech our Lord to maintain our congregation in fervor, regularity, and devotion to the work it has to accomplish; to enable it to surmount difficulties and do great good; to call subjects to it who will, by their virtues, be its strength and its glory; to diffuse through all its members the spirit of faith, devotion to the Holy Eucharist, the humility, charity, and zeal of the holy priest who was its founder, and who with so much courage and disinterestedness sacrificed himself for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

FRAYER.

O Jesus! who invitest us to thy holy table where thou givest thyself to us to be our food, grant that we may approach it with the same dispositions of purity, piety, and love, as thy most faithful servants, so that we may

find in thee our joy, our light, our strength; and that, by virtue of thy most holy sacrament, we may not cease to grow in fervor and generosity in thy service, until the day when thou will admit us to the divine banquet in heaven.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 339.)

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT IN OUR CHURCHES.

“Indeed, the Lord is in this place.”—Gen., xxviii. 16.

CONSIDERATION.

THE Lord is with us ; the Incarnate Word, the Son of God made man for us, personally resides, body and soul, in our City and, perhaps, in our house. What a favor, what a miracle of love ! A loving heart cannot be separated from the object of its affections, and so it was with the heart of Jesus. Yes, he is with us, this God of love ! We possess in our churches that Lord of heaven and earth before whom the hosts of heaven cast themselves down in humble adoration, and who yet wished to be our guest, and to prove that his delight is to be with the children of men.

But as a consequence of this singular gift, how worthy of respect are our churches, and how dear to us should the sanctuaries be wherein he resides ! No, there is nothing greater, nothing more deserving of veneration, nothing to be compared to them !

Fleeing from the anger of Esau, Jacob in a dream saw a mysterious ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and

by which angels ascended and descended, and above him appeared the Lord who renewed to him the promises made to Abraham, saying: "The land wherein thou sleepest I will give to thee and to thy seed . . . and in thee and thy seed all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed."* The holy patriarch on awaking, penetrated with the majesty of God who appeared to him, exclaimed: "Indeed the Lord is in this place. . . . How terrible is this place! this is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven."†

Moses, while feeding his flocks on Mount Horeb, saw a bush burning without being consumed; he wished to behold this prodigy closer at hand, but the Lord spoke to him from the midst of the bush, and said: "Come not nigh hither, put off the shoes from thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."‡

Later on, the Lord manifests his presence on Mount Sinai, and consecrates that mountain the sight of which fills the children of Israel with holy fear. He orders Moses to build a tabernacle, to place the Ark of the Covenant in it, and prescribes the great respect with which the priests and levites should conduct themselves therein.

The temple of Solomon succeeds the tabernacle;—that temple which has had no equal in magnificence, where the holy Ark was kept, where all the solemnities of the true religion were celebrated, where the Lord sensibly manifested his presence on the day of its dedication.

* Gen., xxviii. 13, 14.

† *Ibid.*, 17.

‡ Exodus., iii. 5.

Afterwards came the second temple, far inferior to the first in richness and grandeur, but destined to become, according to the prophecy of Aggeus,† incomparably more glorious, since it would be visited by the “Desired of all nations.”

Such are the holy places which have been the objects of special veneration by the Jewish people: but how far inferior are they to our churches!

Here the Lord dwells with his angels, who are going from us to him, and returning from him to us. Here are truly the house of God and the gate of heaven, for the God of Abraham here shows himself to his servants, and encourages, strengthens, and blesses them.

Here the heart of the adorable Emmanuel burns without being consumed, and a voice issues from the bosom of that mysterious flame, inviting us to approach with sentiments of the most profound adoration. Here is the mountain of God where the sovereign Master makes known to us his commands, clothes us with his mission, and furnishes us with the means of fulfilling it. There are not on this mountain the lightnings and thunders of Sinai; the Lord shows himself as the most gentle of fathers and loving of mothers.

Here is the new Ark of the Covenant containing, instead of the tables of the law, the divine Lawgiver himself. Here is the Lord seated upon the Cherubim, delivering his oracles, offering himself in sacrifice, being a luminous cloud for us that guides our steps securely in the desert of life.

* Aggeus, ii. 8.

Here is the King of kings, the true Solomon, the Prince of peace, the Messiah so long expected !

How great, then, is the glory of our churches ! Does not the Lord say of each of them : “I have chosen and have sanctified this place that my name may be there forever, and my eyes and my heart may remain there perpetually.”* It is here that I dwell, and when any one who wishes to be my disciple says to me, “Master, where dwellest thou ?” it is to this place I lead him, saying, “Come and see.”†

Christian churches, sanctuaries of the adorable Eucharist, abode of happiness to the faithful soul, how is it possible to express your greatness, and your titles to our affection ! Nothing was as dear to our fathers as the holy land—those spots where our Savior was born, where he wrought his miracles, taught his doctrine, suffered, and died. They shed tears at the very thought of the humble house at Nazareth, the grotto at Bethlehem, the room of the last supper, and Calvary ; and if able to go thither, the enthusiasm of their piety knew no bounds.

But are not our churches all this at once ? Does not the Son of God come down from heaven and become incarnate there in the hands of the priest ? Does he not here renew his birth, his life, his death, and burial ? Yes, we possess truly in our sanctuaries the divine Child, the Teacher of nations, the Lamb sacrificed for the redemption of the world, and there he instructs us, feeds us with himself, and continues to shed his blood for us.

Ah ! who can call to mind these wonders, and not be

* 2 Paral., vii. 16.

† St. John, i. 38, 39.

penetrated to the depth of his soul with the conviction, that our churches are monuments of a divine order worthy of all the veneration of men and angels ?

APPLICATION.

Let us always profoundly respect our churches and conduct ourselves therein with religious seriousness, manifesting in all our exterior that we know the holiness and greatness of him before whom we kneel.

Let us never forget the presence of Jesus' Christ there. By the light of faith let us behold him in the sacrament of his love, and let us present him our homage of adoration and prayer. Let us appreciate our happiness in being able to communicate our wants to him in the way he allows. Oh ! what a subject for thanksgiving to his infinite goodness !

"One day," says St. Liguori, "Jesus Christ will sit in a throne of majesty in the valley of Jehosaphat; but here, in the most holy sacrament, he sits on a throne of love. He is a most loving and generous friend to us in this valley of tears. We can converse with him, we can open our hearts to him, we can ask for graces, we can treat with him on the interests of our souls, in the strictest confidence and in the greatest intimacy."

Let us know how to profit by these advantages, and let us neglect nothing to make them beneficial to the souls confided to us.

Let us rekindle our zeal for the house of God. Let us train our pupils to respect and love it; let us not cease to tend towards that end by all the means at our

disposal. Let us lead them to venerate the churches and take delight in them, so as to visit them after leaving their classes, and find therein a place of refuge against the seductions and allurements of the world, the devil, and the flesh.

Let it be a pleasure to us when obedience calls us to the presence of Jesus Christ, and let us then say with David : “I rejoiced at the things that were said to me : we shall go into the house of the Lord.”* Let us truly love the sanctuaries where the God of the Holy Eucharist resides ; for it is especially of them we can say : “How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts !” Let others take shelter in the tents of the wicked, for me thy altars, “O Lord of hosts, my king and my God ! . . . For better is one day there than a thousand elsewhere.”†

PRAYER.

O divine Savior who admittest me to thy presence ! teach me to respect as I ought the sanctity of thy house, to feel delight in it as thy saints did, and to pray to thee with the same fervor, so that I may be able to say, like them : “We have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple.”‡ Oh, grant that, rendering thee the worship of love that they rendered thee, I, too, may deserve to experience thy mercy in that eternal temple of which our churches are the figure, and where thy presence brings sovereign happiness.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 340.)

* Ps., cxxi. 1. † *Ibid.*, lxxxiii. 2, 4, 11. ‡ *Ibid.*, xlviij. 10.

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

LIFE AND MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“I live by the Father.”—St. John, vi. 58.

CONSIDERATION.

THE sacramental life of Jesus Christ is the renewal and continuation of his natural life. What that divine Savior did when he was visibly among men, he does still in an invisible way in our holy tabernacles and on our altars.

Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist adores his heavenly Father, and pays him the homage which his sovereign Majesty merits. He lives by him and dwells in him. He contemplates him, praises him, loves him, blesses and glorifies him.

Ah ! who could comprehend, O divine Solitary, the merit of your adorations, the ardor of your love, the liveliness of your thanksgivings to your Father, and the sublimity of your colloquies with him ? What a consolation for the faithful soul to think, that through you the infinite majesty is here below infinitely adored, thanked, and praised, and that our homage of adoration and thanksgiving passing through your heart, rises even

to him and draws down upon us the effects of his goodness !

Jesus is, in the Holy Eucharist, our high-priest, our advocate, and our mediator. "That sweet Savior," says St. Liguori, "always living in heaven to intercede for men, continues also unceasingly in that sacrament day and night to fulfil the pious office of advocate for us, by offering himself to his Father as a perpetual victim, and also to obtain for us his numberless graces and mercies."

He beseeches him to apply to us the merits of his labors, his sufferings, and his death. He begs him to forgive us, offering him his blood which was poured out on Calvary in expiation of our offences. He shows him his cross, the wounds in his feet and hands, and that of his heart.

What a subject for wonder, a God praying for us to God ! . . . What a respectful, fervent, and efficacious prayer is that which arises from the holy tabernacle, and which not having ceased from the origin of the Church, will continue without interruption until the end of time !

Jesus Christ in the most holy sacrament is our friend, our shepherd, our benefactor, our guide, our help, our consolation. His first thought in establishing the Holy Eucharist was, next to that of nourishing our souls, to live with us, to be the companion of our pilgrimage, to assist us in our trials ; for, as St. Thomas says, it is the property of true friendship to love to live with friends and to console them in their difficulties.

"O beautiful sight," says St. Liguori, "to see Jesus on that day when, tired, he sat down by the fountain, waiting for the sinful woman of Samaria to convert and save her! Does it not seem to be the same on our altars which are so many fountains of grace? Does he not there wait for souls? Does he not invite them to come to him that he may draw them to his perfect love?"

"Our Lord appeared visibly one day to St. Catherine of Sienna in the sacred host, as in a furnace of love, whence issued torrents of flames that spread over the whole earth; then the saint felt herself almost swoon with astonishment, that men could live without burning with love for a God who had so much love for them."

Yes, Jesus loves us: let us understand it well, and hasten to respond to the advances of his heart. Let us say to him with the pious Mary Eustelle: "O Jesus, love of my soul, my heart would wish to possess you without end and without interruption. You are my life, my light, my joy, my peace, and my all. O heavenly friend, the glances you cast on me attract all the inclinations of my heart towards you!"

In his Eucharistic life, as in his natural life, Jesus Christ is employed in doing good. How admirable are the works he performs through the Holy Eucharist! Who could reckon the number of miracles he has wrought and still performs through it? How many blind see, how many lepers are cured, how many dead are raised to life through the virtue of his adorable flesh! That sweet Savior continues, through the Holy Eucharist, his course down the gulf of ages, forgiving sins, casting out

devils, and delivering us from our infirmities. To how many souls who were paralytic, has he not spoken from the interior of the tabernacle, saying, "Arise and walk!" To how many blind has he not restored sight! How many dead has he not, by the efficacy of the sacrifice of the altar, sent back living to the Church which was mourning their loss!

Let us bless him! Let us say to him with the illustrious St. Liguori: "O my Savior who workest here so many miracles, grant this one also, I beseech thee, of drawing me wholly to thyself!"

Jesus is, in the most holy sacrament, as on a throne of grace. He does not cease to overwhelm us by his favors. He proves that it is his happiness to make us enjoy the treasures he merited for us. To every soul that calls on him, he says; "Arise above thy miseries: I am here to enrich thee with my graces."

How clearly he enlightens devout souls that have recourse to him in their doubts! What consolations he makes those enjoy who are wholly devoted to him! How thoroughly he communicates to them the flames of love which consume his divine heart!

Jesus Christ, in his sacrament, offers himself as a victim for us. On the altar as on Calvary, he is both priest and victim. He renews mystically the effusion of his blood which washes out the sins of the world; he satisfies the justice of God, to leave the exercise of his mercy free.

Jesus Christ is, in the adorable sacrament, our spiritual food, the nourishment of our souls. He comes to

us, he gives himself to each of us; our hearts become his altar, his tabernacle, his ciborium; he lives in us by that life which we have seen filled with so many prodigies, and enlightens us, consoles us, fortifies us, heals us, and loads us with his graces, and, according to the expression of the Church, "keeps our souls for eternal life."*

APPLICATION.

Let us adore Jesus Christ in his Eucharistic life. Let us unite our homages to those which the angels who surround our holy tabernacles pay to him, and to those offered to him by so many seraphic souls who were consumed with love in his presence. Let us say to him: "O Jesus! you are the source of all good things, the physician of the sick, the treasure of the poor. Behold me at your feet, weak and miserable, begging your mercy. Graciously hear me, O my sweet Savior, my life, my hope, my treasure, the only love of my soul!"†

Let us unite with that divine mediator, our priest and our victim, and through him let us render to our heavenly Father our homage of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, supplication, and love.

Let us endeavor, with the help of grace, to reproduce in our conduct the life of Jesus Christ in the most holy sacrament—the hidden life, the life of union with God, the life of charity, humility, and obedience. Let us be true adorers of the Father, and go about on earth doing

* Liturgy.

† St. Liguori.

good. Let us act towards our neighbor as Jesus Christ acts towards us, and let us put no limits to our charity.

Let us go to Jesus himself, to draw strength and courage to do so. Let us often visit him in his holy tabernacle; let us have recourse to him on every occasion, and especially in our trials. Let us maintain the most intimate, the most constant relations with him, and he will be our life, our support, our guide, and our consolation.

Let us show ourselves grateful towards that sweet Savior, that devoted friend, that generous benefactor. Let us bless him for his presence among us, and the numberless graces springing from this as their source.

Let us carefully prepare our hearts in which he is coming to reside. When receiving him in holy communion, let us give ourselves to him entirely and for ever. From that moment let us live truly by him. Yes, let it be Jesus who, in us and by us, shall think, love, desire, pray, and labor to glorify his Father and save souls. We shall thus do what he wants of us, and he will reward us, by giving himself to us for eternity.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, adorable Master, who hast said, "He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me,"* grant, I beseech thee, that those words may be entirely fulfilled in me! Come and take possession of my heart; direct

* St. John, vi. 58.

thou alone all its affections. "O living bread that givest life to man, give my soul the grace of living only by thee, and of always finding in thee its joy and its delight."†

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 340.)

* From the *Adoro te.*

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

JESUS OUR MODEL IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“Look and make it according to the pattern that was shown thee on the mount.”—Exodus, xxv. 40.

CONSIDERATION.

THE priest, before beginning the holy sacrifice, says, “I will go unto the altar of God.”* The altar is, in fact, the mountain of God where the holy miracles of Horeb, Sinai, Thabor, Gethsemane, and Calvary, are wrought ; where the power, wisdom, and goodness of God are most marvellously manifested ; where he who is sanctity itself, is presented to us, and in regard to whom the Father addresses us in the same words he used to Moses, when speaking of the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant : “Make it according to the pattern that was shown thee on the mount.”

Oh ! what a model Jesus Christ is in his Eucharistic life. What virtues can be imagined that he does not practise in the most eminent degree ! Does he not reveal himself there as consummate justice, perfection itself, sanctity in its essence ?

What he has done during his mortal life he does in

* Ps., xlvi. 4.

the most blessed sacrament, where he reproduces the divine example given to men.

Here, as well as there, he adores the Father; he loves him, praises him, blesses him; he does his will in all things, and is consumed with zeal for his glory. He has said: "Did you not know that I must be about the things that are my Father's?"* Now he admirably realizes these words, for he remains night and day in the holy temple where he is employed consuming and sacrificing himself to raise up adorers in spirit and in truth to God his Father, to lead up souls to him, and to console and gladden his heart.

He does not cease to present him a worthy homage of love and gratitude. Oh! what a fire of charity is that which burns on our altars! How brilliantly it soars up towards God, who, considering the sacred heart from which it rises, again says: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."† And in consideration of that divine Savior, he looks upon the earth with kindness and grants us mercy.

Jesus, in the holy sacrament, loves men with the most tender, most constant, and most generous love.

"O inconceivable prodigy!"—exclaims a pious author,‡ who seems to have no life, thought, or sentiment, but for the adorable Eucharist:—"O miracle of love! to love beyond death, to love even to the end of time, to love for the sole good of the object beloved, to love in spite of a thousand outrages, to love so far as to

* St. Luke, ii. 49.

† St. Matt., iii. 17.

‡ The Baron de Geramb, *Lettres à Eugène*.

give himself to be their food, to love so as to annihilate himself, multiply himself, reproduce himself at every instant. . . . Behold what he has done for us—he ! before whom the stars, the sun, empires, and the heavens are but dust and darkness.”

Love brings him to abasement. “That great king,” says St. Teresa, “is concealed under the appearance of bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist: he has thus veiled his majesty, to give us the courage to draw nearer and with more confidence to his divine heart.”

He annihilates himself, he humbles himself, he appears as the servant of all ; his humanity is concealed as well as his divinity : he is here more humiliated even than on Calvary. What a subject of astonishment ! It is under the appearance of ordinary food that the King of heaven, the Lord of the angels, really, personally, resides.

Jesus Christ, in the Holy Eucharist, is the perfect model of self-sacrifice. He is here as a victim ; here he mystically sheds his blood by which we are justified, becoming our mediator and our advocate with his Father, consoling the afflicted and drying their tears, pouring the oil and wine of grace upon our wounds, feeding us with his flesh.

Behold what a model is proposed to our imitation ! Oh ! let us observe its characters well !

He is a model of all the virtues of a Christian, a religious, a teacher, a priest, a father, for every man, no matter what his condition may be.

He is a model presented to us by our heavenly

Father, and whom we ought to resemble, to obtain admission into heaven ; a model whom the saints contemplated, so to say, unceasingly, while they made it their study to reproduce his features in their conduct : a model who exhausts the admiration of the angels themselves.

He is a model placed always before our eyes, and able to be contemplated by all men.

Perhaps the example of Jesus Christ in his mortal life might not have made sufficient impression upon us, as the events of his life took place at a distance from us in time and space : therefore he wished to reproduce them in his Eucharistic life, to reproduce them constantly, and in each of our tabernacles. What a precious advantage ! What need have we to envy those who lived at the time of his mission, and had the happiness to see and hear him ?

No, no, we have nothing to regret in that respect ; and it even seems that Jesus Christ is a more finished model to us in his Eucharistic life than in his mortal life. His virtues in the former have a duration and universality that they could not have in the latter : moreover, in the Holy Eucharist, his adoration seems more constant, his gratitude more entire, his obedience more prompt, his humility more profound, his poverty greater, his patience more unalterable, his love of a hidden life, and his renouncement of the things of earth more absolute.

Let us rejoice over our condition and endeavor to profit by it. After having considered Jesus as our

model, let us have nothing more at heart than to endeavor to form ourselves to his likeness, remembering that it is the first of our duties, and that, moreover, he is himself by his grace the means we have for fulfilling it.

APPLICATION.

Let us adore Jesus Christ in his sacrament. Let us see in him the divine Master, giving men by his example the most sublime and salutary lessons.

Let us frequently consider him in his quality of model to Christians and Religious. Let us be well persuaded that our life on earth ought to be, like his Eucharistic life, a state of retreat, of union with God, of separation from the world, of obedience, humility, and sacrifice.

Let us impress this thought on the souls confided to us, so that with us they may follow the examples given by God himself.

Let us pray to him with the most fervent earnestness, to give us the grace to imitate him as perfectly as we can. Let us labor courageously and constantly for that end which is, in fact, the most worthy of our efforts.

We wish to glorify Jesus Christ: now, is not the first means of doing so, to walk in his footsteps, to study to reproduce his virtues in ourselves?

We wish to obey him: but does he not say to us from the tabernacle what he said to the apostles after

washing their feet : "I have given you an example that as I have done to you, so you do also."*

"But if we wish to hear and relish his holy doctrine," says the author of the *Imitation*, † "he who would fully and feelingly understand the words of Jesus Christ, must study to make his whole life conformable to that of his divine model."

We wish to fulfil the obligations of our state : but is not the first of these to tend to perfection, to acquire from day to day a greater resemblance to our adorable model placed beneath our eyes, and to whom the pre-destined must be made like ?‡

Yes, yes, let us strive to that end, and if we do not feel in ourselves sufficient strength and courage, let us have recourse to Jesus Christ, and he will give them to us. Let us pray to him with all the fervor of our souls to help us to follow in his footsteps, so that, as he says himself, we may not walk in darkness.§ Let us beseech him that his coming into our hearts by holy communion may have the effect of making us like to him, and preserving in us afterwards that resemblance which alone gives us a right to the inheritance of heaven.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, adorable Master ! thou art in the adorable sacrament, as thou wert in thy mortal life, the perfect model of all virtues : oh ! grant that by thy grace I may understand the example thou givest me, and above all

* St. John, xiii. 15. † Book i. ch. i. 2. ‡ Rom., viii. 29.

§ St. John, viii. 12.

that I may manifest it in my conduct, as thou requirest of me, so that I may obtain of thee the happiness of one day sharing in the glory with which thou recompensest thy faithful imitators in heaven !

(See Résumés, page 341.)

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

JESUS OUR MODEL IN OUR DUTIES TOWARDS GOD.

“I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do.”—St. John, xiv. 31.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS CHRIST, in his Eucharistic life, is to us a perfect model as to our duties towards God, for in the blessed sacrament, as well as when he was visibly among men, he adores his Father, he prays to him, he loves and blesses him, and does his will, and procures his glory in the way that is most excellent.

What a tribute of adoration he offers him while holding himself, as it were, annihilated under the sacred species, while mystically offering himself daily and every where throughout the Church to render and continue the sacrifice of Calvary ? What a homage he offers his sovereignty, his supreme greatness, his omnipotence ?

Yes, we have with us a God adoring God. Ah ! if the Father accepts the praises of the just souls who on earth extol his perfections ; if he takes pleasure in the hymns of the saints and angels, and particularly that of Mary celebrating his greatness through eternity ; how

must the voice of his adorable Son blessing him in the name of all his creatures, gladden his heart !

Jesus, in his holy sacrament, exercises his office of mediator, and calls down upon us the effects of the mercy and goodness of his Father. Our high-priest is always living to intercede for us.* What humble, fervent, confident, persevering prayers arise from our tabernacles to the throne of the Most High, like the smoke of a true divine incense embalming the eternal temple, ravishing the admiration of the heavenly hosts, penetrating the heart of God, and disposing him to grant us all blessings !

The Holy Eucharist is the *résumé* of all the mysteries of the life of our Savior : the altar is at the same time the crib where the divine Infant of Bethlehem prays in silence, the secret oratory whence the adorable youth of Nazareth sends up his supplications to heaven, the garden of Gethsemane where the Man of Sorrows pours forth his griefs into the bosom of his Father, and prays to him with many sighs and tears, and the cross from which he asks forgiveness for his very persecutors.

O prayer of Jesus, our Victim, how could you fail to have all efficacy ? Happy, then, are those for whom you implore the divine clemency, and who by their good will second your merciful designs ! They shall be enriched with blessings, and will advance from virtue to virtue until they shall be filled with justice and sanctity.

Jesus, in his sacrament, renders to his Father the

* Heb., vii. 25.

homage of an ardent, affectionate, tender, constant, disinterested, and devoted love; or rather, his heart burns for him with that same eternal and infinite love whence the Third Person of the glorious Trinity proceeds, and who is the perfect model, as he is the source, of all true love.

Jesus Christ, in the adorable sacrament, renders to God his Father a perfect homage of infinite gratitude. What thanks he offers him for all his favors towards us, for all the attentions of his Providence towards other creatures, for the glory with which he rewards the faithful angels and the elect, for the prerogatives with which he has enriched Mary, the spotless Virgin and masterpiece of his hands; for the perfections with which he endowed his most holy humanity!

Moreover, the very name *Eucharist*, which signifies thanksgiving, reminds us that Jesus, our Victim, does not cease to bless the Father for all the works of his goodness and clemency.

He offers him also the homage of the most entire submission, for he is always a victim on our altars, carrying obedience to the most absolute abnegation, repeating, as in the garden of olives: "My Father, not my will but thine be done."*

Jesus Christ, in the blessed sacrament, procures with the most admirable zeal the glory of his Father. He is there to raise up to him adorers in spirit and in truth, to infuse into hearts the fire of divine love, to draw souls towards him and attach them to his service. He is there

* St. Luke, xxii. 42.

realizing these words of the Gospel: "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled."* To what, indeed, does his action upon souls tend but to penetrate them with fires of charity, to make them esteem, seek, and follow the sovereign good only; to make them embrace the practice of virtue from the purest motives; to place them on the way to heaven and sustain them in it to the end?

How many, through the efficacy of this divine sacrament, have attained to that happy end, and thank him for it in eternal life!

Moreover, is not the Holy Eucharist a furnace feeding, in the souls of men, the sacred fire of zeal for God's glory? Was it not after being united to Jesus in the blessed sacrament, that the apostles of all ages have sown, with so much self-sacrifice, the seed of the word of God, snatched so many souls from the power of hell, carried the torch of religion so far, and led so many people captive under the yoke of the Gospel?

Yes, Jesus in the most holy sacrament glorifies his Father! The angels can sing over our tabernacles, as over the grotto of Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."†

Behold in what the life of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist consists. What examples he gives us therein! Oh! how we should gladden his heart if we reproduced them in our conduct, if through him we truly rendered to the Father we have in heaven the homage we owe

* St. Luke, xii. 49.

† *Ibid.*, ii. 14.

him, adoring him, loving him, blessing him, submitting ourselves in all things to his will, and devoting ourselves without reserve to his glory.

APPLICATION.

Let us endeavor to imitate Jesus in his Eucharistic life. Let us regulate by him our thoughts, our desires, our words, our resolutions, and our works. Let our greatest ambition be to become as conformable to him as we can, through his grace.

Let us occupy our mind with God and the things of God. Let this beauty, ever ancient and ever new, be the object of all our thoughts. God has created us to know him : let us devote ourselves, then, to the study and contemplation of his adorable perfections.

Let us keep our desires and affections raised towards him. Let us aspire with all our strength to unite ourselves to him, and let us love him with all our heart. Let this love be ardent, courageous, persevering, and grateful in us. Let us appreciate the benefits we receive from the divine goodness, and let us render him thanks through Jesus Christ, the Eucharistic victim.

Let us glorify God by our words, speaking of him, leading souls to adore him, love him, and bless him. Let us glorify him by our will, in submitting it entirely to his holy will, and forming the sincere resolution of being wholly his and for ever. Let us glorify him in our works, by faithfully observing his law, by keeping our rules exactly, by never ceasing to edify our neighbor, by manifesting through our conduct that the grace

of the God of the Eucharist is not unproductive in us, but that it truly brings forth fruits of sanctification and salvation.

PRAYER.

O most holy Father, accept, I beseech thee, my homage of adoration, love, thanksgiving, and submission, in union with those which thy divine Son, the sole object of thy complacency, renders thee in the holy sacrament of the altar.

I offer thee all his sentiments of respect, love, gratitude, obedience, and humility; and I present them to thee for myself and all those who have recommended themselves to my prayers, so that through him thou mayst be worthily praised and for ever glorified by all.

O Lord my God, receive my supplications and wishes to be able to give thee the infinite praise and blessings justly due to thee, because of thy infinite greatness! Behold the homage which I render through Jesus in the host, and which I desire to render thee each day and each instant of my life!

Like him, and through him, I say to thee with my heart and mouth, and I repeat it a thousand times: "Not my will, but thine be done."

Deign, in consideration of the glory he renders thee, to grant me the grace of an entire conformity of heart with him, so that glorifying thee on earth, I may have the happiness of seeing and blessing thee for ever in heaven.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 341.)

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

JESUS IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST THE MODEL OF HUMILITY.

“Verily thou art a hidden God.”—Isa., xlvi. 15.

CONSIDERATION.

“AMONG all the works of divine love,” says St. Liguori, “there is not one in which these words of the prophet, ‘Verily thou art a hidden God,’ are more truly verified than in the adorable Eucharist. The eternal Word, in becoming incarnate, concealed his divinity, and appeared as man upon earth; but in this sacrament he conceals his very humanity.”

“In the Holy Eucharist,” says St. Bernard, “the divinity is hidden, the humanity is hidden: in that fact there is revealed an immense love.”

The Son of God made Man wished to conceal himself in the bosom of his Mother, in the stable of Bethlehem, in the shop of a poor artisan, in the ignominies of the passion, in the depth of the tomb; here, he conceals himself still more; he conceals himself beneath the appearances of a little bread and wine: he most completely veils his majesty. His wisdom furnished him with the means of remaining without being seen in the

midst of men, and his zeal for the glory of his Father and our salvation made him make use of it.

The humiliations of Jesus Christ in his Eucharistic life, as in his mortal life, are the acts of his adoration towards his Father, to whom he offers himself as he offered himself on the cross, to glorify him and worthily acknowledge his supreme dominion over all things. They are also a most salutary lesson to us : oh ! how he, by his example, leads us to humble ourselves before God and men ! Is it not from his tabernacle, in particular, that he says to us, “Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart ;”* “The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister ;”† “You call me Master and Lord ;”‡ “But I am in the midst of you, as he that serveth ?”§

Ah ! who can contemplate him in the sacred host, without feeling himself, as it were, drawn to embrace the practice of the most entire self-denial, to renounce every sentiment of self-love, to wish to be reckoned as of no account among men, and to be ambitious of being the last of all ?

“O Incarnate Word !” exclaims St. Liguori, “your humiliations have no limit, because your love for your Father and your charity towards us are boundless.” Ah ! who, indeed, could measure the depth of your humiliations ?

The Son of God is man’s prisoner, and enclosed within a narrow tabernacle. The Author of life shows no

* St. Matt., xi. 29. † St. Mark, x. 45. ‡ St. John, xiii. 13.
§ St. Luke, xxii. 27.

sign of life. He who rules the world is at the mercy of his creatures. The Immense, the Infinite, is hidden under the accidents of a crumb of bread, which the wind might carry about like a grain of dust.

Faith shows us on the altar the Lamb who is the sun of the new Jerusalem, and whose beauty is the delight of the saints ; but our natural eyes see only the impenetrable cloud with which it is enveloped, they see only the appearances of ordinary food. Ah ! does it not seem that, here, Jesus Christ descends lower than in his mortal life into the depth of humiliation ?

There, it is true, he conceals his divinity, though not always completely ; for almost numberless miracles reveal it to pure hearts. Moreover, he shows himself in his humanity : at Bethlehem, he is a child full of grace and affability ; at Nazareth, he is the admiration of all who know him ; during his public life, the crowd clings closely to him, enraptured to see and hear him.

But here, he conceals both his divinity and his humanity ;* his form is even less than that with which he clothed himself when assuming our nature, and, regarding which, St. Paul said : “ He debased himself, taking the form of a servant.”†

On the cross, Jesus Christ drank the chalice of humiliations to the dregs ; he appeared like a criminal undergoing the most ignominious punishment : but at least, he showed his wounds ; there was still seen in him human nature, and some vestige of his greatness could be seen under the veil that covered his face.

* Hymn, *Adoro te.*

† Philipp., ii. 7.

In the blessed sacrament, there is to the eye nothing like to this ; there he conceals both his glory and his wounds ; he gives a perpetual fulfilment to these words of the prophet Isaias : * “ We have seen him and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of him.” He has suppressed everything that could make him known, and gives no other proof of his presence than these words which he himself formerly pronounced : “ This is my body ; this is my blood ; do this in commemoration of me.”

Ah ! how can we think of these things, and not be filled with the greatest astonishment ? He whom the boundless space of creation cannot contain, is entirely in that host which the priest holds between his fingers ; the Word of God who reigns in heaven with so much power, glory, and majesty, is on earth in what may be called the borders of nothingness. . . . Might it not be said that he was afraid of being recognized and adored ? Ah ! could he have lowered himself more had he wished to be disdained or despised !

To the humiliations arising from this state, are added those he undergoes on the part of men. How many wretches have passed before the altar, shaking their heads and casting insults upon him, as the Jews did at the foot of the cross ! How many have profaned the sacred species ! How often has hypocrisy been the cause of his entering into a polluted heart, into an abode where Satan reigned supreme ! Oh, what an outrage to his holiness !

* Isa., liii. 2.

The Scripture, speaking of the friends of Job, says, that when they saw him on his dunghill in a state of the most frightful misery, they were so surprised and terrified that they remained seven days without breaking silence: and yet the state of Job did not exactly represent that of the God of the Holy Eucharist, introduced by sacrilege into an impure heart that was a receptacle for devils.

Let us, too, remain in silence through astonishment, and shed tears at the sight of the humiliations of the adorable Emmanuel outraged and scorned by many, and treated with indifference by so great a number.

His inexpressible humiliations are continual: what he was from the beginning in his holy sacrament, he is still and will be till the end of the world.

APPLICATION.

Let us adore Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and strive to compensate, by our homages of respect and veneration, the humiliations he undergoes there. Let us behold him as our model and imitate him.

Let us go as far as possible in self-denial. Oh! how far are we still from the point to which our divine Master descended!

Let us fly vain glory: ah! what matter the esteem, the praises, and approbation of men, and what can they avail us before God!

Let us accept contumelies with resignation and even with joy; let us appreciate them as occasions for enriching us for heaven.

Let us labor to destroy self-love in us, to take from our hearts all self-seeking, all ambition, all susceptibility.

Let us fervently beg the grace of humility ; and for this purpose let us ask it of the adorable heart of Jesus ; let us ask of him the courage to imitate him by renouncing ourselves, by sacrificing our self-esteem. Let us humble ourselves with our divine Master, remembering that the deeper that humiliation will be, the greater shall be the glory with which it will be recompensed, for he hath said : “He who humbleth himself shall be exalted.”*

PRAYER.

“I prostrate myself before thee, O God truly hidden in this sacrament of thy love, and I offer thee the homage of my heart ! The sight, the touch, the taste here fail, but the hearing which hears the words of faith does not deceive.”† On the cross, the divinity alone was hidden ; here, are hidden both the divinity and the humanity ; and it is by believing and professing one and the other I ask that which the thief asked : “Remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom ;”‡ and grant by thy grace that, imitating thee in thy humiliations, I may be admitted to participate in thy eternal glory.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 342.)

* St. Luke, xiv. 2.

† From the *Adoro te.*

‡ St. Luke, xxiii. 42.

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

JESUS IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST—A MODEL OF OBEDIENCE, SELF-DENIAL, AND PATIENCE.

“I am in the midst of you, as he that serveth.”—

St. Luke, xxii. 27.

CONSIDERATION.

THE life of a Christian, and, with still more reason, that of a Religious, ought to be a life of obedience, self-denial, and patience: and that life finds its perfect model in the life Jesus Christ led upon earth, as well as in that he leads in the most holy sacrament of the altar.

Oh, how admirable is the obedience of Jesus Christ in his Eucharistic life! what submission he there offers to God his Father!

St. Paul, praising Jesus Christ, says: “He made himself obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* “Now, in his sacrament,” says St. Liguori, “that divine Savior seems to have gone further, since he wished to become obedient not only to his eternal Father, but to a man; not until death alone, but until the end of the world.

“He, the King of glory, descends from heaven to

* Philipp., ii. 8.

obey man ; he seems to remain on our altars only through obedience. He remains here without a motion ; he allows himself to be placed where they wish, to be exposed in monstrances, or shut up in the tabernacle : he allows himself to be carried into houses, through the streets of our towns and villages ; he allows himself, in communion, to be given to the just and to sinners.

“While he lived upon earth, he obeyed Mary and Joseph ; but in this sacrament, he obeys as many persons as there are priests of our holy religion.”

Every day, at every hour, and in every place, weak mortals, like other Joshuas, command the Sun of Justice, who at their voice becomes present on earth, and remains here as long as the sacred species, under which he conceals himself, shall last.

Obedience of my Savior ! you are most perfect, most universal, most prompt, and persevering ! that kind of obedience which we Religious especially ought to strive to imitate, so as to fulfil the end of our holy state and respond to the views of him who called us to it.

Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is a model of self-denial, renunciation, and poverty. He there makes no exterior use of his senses, and remains in the most absolute silence. Where he is placed, he remains. Whatever is done, he makes no resistance. He remains there, a captive in his prison of love. He is in the host, as it were, dead and buried : the sacred species are, if we may say so, the winding sheet of his sacred body.

What examples of poverty he gives us ! Oh ! what reason St. Paul had to say : “Being rich, he became

poor for your sakes.”* The accidents of a little bread and wine are the raiment of the King who, alas! often dwells in tabernacles where everything is wanting that the dignity of the worship requires! O afflicting spectacle! He who created the sun that enlightens us, has not sometimes even a lamp lighted before his altar! He who decks the fields with verdure and flowers is left in a dark abode, perhaps covered with dust! He who has scattered gold through the bowels of the earth, is enclosed in ciboriums of vile metal.

He dwells in half-ruined churches, on worm-eaten altars, and his cloths and corporals are of linen of no value.

Yes, the God of the Holy Eucharist is poor, and from his tabernacle he preaches to us the esteem and practice of poverty, and renunciation of the riches of the world at least in heart, and repeats the words of the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”†

Jesus, in the Holy Eucharist, is also a perfect model of patience, longanimity, and sweetness. Doubtless, he is there impassible, since he preserves the prerogatives of a glorified body: but, in one sense, he suffers the keenest and most numerous torments in his heart.

Let us recall to mind the profanations which the enemies of religion have made of his sacred body, the blasphemies uttered against his divine presence, the writings scattered everywhere to extinguish the light of faith in his real presence from the hearts of men.

* 2 Cor., viii. 9.

† St. Matt., v. 3.

Let us think on the outrage which a sacrilegious communion offers, when a new Judas delivers him by a perfidious kiss to Satan himself. Let us consider, moreover, how sensibly he feels the coldness and indifference of so many Christians who forget what they owe him, who desert his temple, and keep from his holy table.

Yes, our malice perpetuates the sufferings of his passion, and the world is an immense Calvary bathed with the blood and tears of our divine Redeemer. Yes, he suffers everywhere, and we may say for all; yet he suffers with the greatest patience. How differently he acted when he struck Nadab and Abihu with death for having burnt strange fire in the tabernacle; and the Bethsamites, for having looked with curiosity on the holy Ark; Oza, for having touched it with his hand! He whom the Scripture calls the God of vengeance,* is here, according to the full extent of the words of Isaias, like a lamb dumb before the shearer.†

Let us admire and adore that divine Master always carrying his cross, always drinking to the dregs the chalice of his passion, always fastened to the tree of pain and ignominy, and addressing this invitation to us from the holy tabernacle: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. . . Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple."‡

* Ps., xciii. 1.

† Isa., liii. 7.

‡ St. Luke, ix. 23; xiv. 33.

APPLICATION.

At the remembrance of the outrages done to Jesus Christ in his holy sacrament, let us be penetrated with a holy sadness; let us weep over the ingratitude and wickedness of men, who thus slight the most precious gift of his love. Let us make him honorable amends, and compensate, as far as possible, by our profound adorations, for the indifference and contempt he receives from a great number.

Let us console him, and particularly by doing what he requires of us—the perpetual example of which he gives us in his Eucharistic life.

Let us carefully study that divine model placed before our eyes. Let us see Jesus in the blessed sacrament obey, suffer, and sacrifice himself for the glory of his Father and the salvation of souls.

The source of his humiliations is his love. Ah! if we truly loved our God, could we fear to humble ourselves and suffer? In place of flying from them, would we not seek the crosses which his providence places in our way?

What are we doing if we do not imitate our divine model? On what title shall we present ourselves before the eternal Father to ask him for eternal life as a recompense.

As Religious, ought it not to be our study, to reproduce in our conduct the submission, renunciation, poverty, longanimity, and all the other virtues displayed by Jesus in the sacred host? Let us be men of obedience. When

the sovereign Master lowers himself so far as to do the will of his servant, could the servant hesitate to do the will of his sovereign Master ?

Let us practise mortification, self-denial, and patience : let each day behold us making new progress in these admirable virtues. With eyes fixed on the divine Victim of our altars, let us know how to sacrifice our own will, our sensuality, our vanity, our susceptibility, all our unregulated passions, so that we may be, in truth, imitators of Jesus Christ, and become worthy of the glory he has prepared for us.

PRAYER.

I adore thee, O Jesus, Son of the most high God, obedient to the will of thy priests ! I thank thee, O holy Victim, continually offering thyself in sacrifice, continually shedding thy blood for us ! Grant me, I beseech thee, the grace to imitate thee, to faithfully practise obedience, self-denial, renunciation, poverty, patience, so that my life may be a consolation to thy divine heart, and that after having been a victim with thee in this above of sufferings, I may be admitted to reign with thee in the home of eternal peace.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 342.)

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

JESUS THE MODEL OF LOVE TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOR.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."—St. Matt., xix. 19.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us recall to mind our principal duties towards our neighbor, and consider what a model in that respect the Eucharistic life of Jesus Christ presents to us.

That divine Savior continues to love men with the greatest love, and to give them the most certain and astonishing proofs of it, deserving of all their admiration and gratitude. Ah ! when, through the wound of his sacred side, they see his heart uncovered, does not that heart appear to them burning with the fires of the most lively, most amiable, most merciful charity ? There is not one among them for whom that adorable Master is not a guide, a friend, a most loving and devoted father !

Jesus Christ, in the most holy sacrament, perpetuates his sacrifice, and unceasingly gives his life for men. He here prays for them to his Father, from whom he asks pardon for sinners, by showing him his wounds still bleeding, and which will not close.

"The love of Jesus Christ for men," says St. Bernard, "led that sweet Savior, not only to sacrifice his life, but to give himself wholly to them as their food." What a prodigy of tenderness, and to what can it be compared:—for what shepherd feeds his sheep with his own flesh?

Yes, Jesus in his sacrament loves men, and proves it to them in the most admirable way. He loves them all and calls them to him to assist them, to console them, to instruct them, to heal them, to strengthen them, to give them his body and his blood, his merits, his graces, and his kingdom.

At the holy altar, as well as during the days of his mortal life, he dries the tears of the afflicted, he gives sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, health to the sick, liberty to those who are the slaves of sin and the devil. The God of the Eucharist passes on from age to age doing good.

And with what sweetness he does it! Ah! who has turned to him and been rejected? Is not the tabernacle the throne of meekness, a mysterious fountain flowing with milk and honey?

Yes, Jesus in the host is only clemency and goodness; he appears to forget his justice to remember nothing but his mercy. He does not return contempt for contempt, indifference for indifference. He does not break the bruised reed, nor does he extinguish smoking flax;* on the contrary, he strengthens, encourages, revives all who have recourse to him. Therefore, it is

* St. Matt., xii. 20.

to the tepid and sinners, as well as to the fervent and just, that he addresses these words : “Come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.”*

He shows himself full of sweetness even towards those who insult him ; and when new Judases give him the traitor’s kiss, he says to each of them, as to the infamous disciple ; “Friend, whereto art thou come ?”†

No human being can express the sacrifices which his love for us inspires him to make. He gives us all he is, all he has. A liberal King, he gives up to us himself and all his possessions. The course of his munificence knows no break : he is continually offering himself, sacrificing himself, and bestowing himself, for there are always priests saying mass, and faithful communicating.

What a subject for astonishment ! God sacrifices himself for man, the Infinite for the finite. A poor miserable creature is admitted to partake of the flesh and blood of God,‡ and that at all times and everywhere throughout the Church !

Jesus is, in the holy Eucharist, also a model of zeal for the salvation of souls. Oh ! how he desires it—that salvation for which he shed his blood—and does not cease to offer himself to his Father ! What works he performs to bring it about !

He prays that the kingdom of his holy religion may extend more and more, and he offers the infinite merits of his life, his sufferings, and his death, for the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of the just.

* St. Matt., xi. 28. † *Ibid* xxvi. 50. ‡ Hymn, *Sacris Solemnis*.

He draws hearts towards him, and inspires in them the love and practice of virtue. He discovers his loveliness to pure souls, and strengthens them in the path of virtue; he lovingly shows sinful souls their faithlessness, and the wounds they make in his heart, and makes them shed sweet tears of heart-felt repentance.

On the altar, as on the cross, he says: "I thirst,"* and thus shows how ardently he burns for the salvation of souls. That ardor he communicates to apostolic men; and therein lies the secret of the wonders they perform. Nourished with his sacred body, united to him, they sow the divine seed with courage and confidence, and return full of joy bearing sheaves in their hands,† and praising the adorable Emmanuel for the success of their labors.

Behold the works of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, works of charity, sweetness, devotedness and zeal, works of infinite liberality and generosity.

Now what does he expect, what does he ask of us in return?—nothing for himself, all for us. What he wishes is that we profit by his favors, that we apply to ourselves the merits in which he gives us a share; that we continually and increasingly draw from him the strength of virtue, the courage of sacrifice, so that we may prepare for ourselves a place, and a distinguished place, in the abode of eternal happiness.

APPLICATION.

The sanctuary of the God of the Eucharist is a new cœnaculum where Jesus, as on Holy Thursday, repeats

* St. John, xix. 28.

† Ps., cxxv. 6.

his precepts of love. Ah! let us understand his teachings and put them in practice.

Let us address our fervent prayers to him for this purpose. Let us ask of him his spirit of charity, meekness, goodness, and liberality—a spirit which should in an especial manner animate us Religious, and mark with its seal all our words and all our actions.

Let us go to Jesus as the Author of love. Let our hearts draw near to his, so that he may warm them with the same fire. It is by coming to visit the holy sacrament, and still more by receiving holy communion, that we come to participate in his sentiments of tenderness, sweetness, and zeal.

Let us animate ourselves in regard to our neighbor whoever he may be, with a pure, universal, benevolent, devoted, and generous charity. Let us love him as becomes Christians and Religious, admitted so frequently to a union with God in the Holy Eucharist, to participate in that sacrament which the Council of Trent calls “the sign of unity,” “the bond of charity,” “the symbol of union.”*

Let us love Jesus himself in our neighbor. Has he not said, “As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me?”† In loving our brethren, it is Jesus we love; in devoting ourselves to them, it is for Jesus we devote ourselves. He has thus given us a means of rendering love for love, kindness for kindness. Let us make use of it, then, as he wishes.

* Sess., xiii.

† St. Matt., xxv. 40, 45.

Let us practise sweetness, that virtue which is the form of true charity, and which gives all power over souls. Let us ask the grace of it from our Lord, and study to conquer ourselves, to subdue our propensities and antipathies, and every inclination opposed to the love of our neighbor.

Let us devote ourselves wholly to the important work entrusted to us. Let us study the wishes of the heart of Jesus, and think only of realizing them. Let us labor with courage, self-denial, and perseverance, for the salvation of souls. Ah ! when hell employs every means to ruin them, could not the friends of God, the disciples of Jesus Christ, sacrifice themselves joyfully to save them ?

Let it be our whole study to imitate the charity, zeal, and devotedness of Jesus in the blessed sacrament, so that, accomplishing his will and doing good upon earth, we may become worthy to enjoy him in the life of glory.

PRA^YER.

O Jesus, generous Redeemer, whose loye for us is so great, grant that we may imitate thee, and have a pure, constant, and devoted love for our neighbor ! Our heart unites so often with thine, O grant that it may partake in thy sentiments of charity, sweetness, goodness, and zeal ! Grant that we may live on earth doing good, and thus merit that final blessing which will introduce us into heaven, that abode of eternal happiness, the only object of our hopes.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 343.)

THIRTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“Wisdom hath mingled her wine, and set forth her table.”—
Prov., ix. 2.

CONSIDERATION.

EVERY thing belonging to the Holy Eucharist, is calculated to instruct us directly or indirectly in our principal duties as Christians or Religious, and to lead us to the practice of charity, mortification, gratitude, poverty, and humility, or rather to the practice of all virtues.

The bread and wine which are the remote matter of the sacrament, proceed from many grains of bruised wheat, and from many bruised grapes, forming at last but one whole. Now, according to St. Augustine and the other fathers, and even according to the Church, this is a symbol of the union which should exist among the faithful. Each one should sacrifice the love of himself to that of his brethren, his private interest to the general interest, self-gratification to the requirements of charity.

The Church, through the holy Council of Trent, gives us this instruction, by calling the Eucharist the “sign of unity,” “the bond of charity,” “the symbol of peace and

concord." Moreover, she says in her office: "O Lord! deign to grant to thy Church the gifts of unity and peace, represented in a mystical manner by the gifts we offer thee."*

The Holy Eucharist calls us to the practice of renunciation and mortification, and makes us understand that precept expressed in the office of the holy sacrament: "It is necessary that these vestiges of the old man should disappear; all here should be new—heart, language, and works."†

And in fact, by the words of consecration the substances of bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Now, is not that change the model of what grace produces in our souls? Ought we not, as far as possible, to change ourselves into Jesus Christ, to work in ourselves through him a moral transubstantiation, to become other Christs? Should we not, consequently, renounce our own will, our own inclinations, so as not to think, love, desire, or wish but through that divine Savior, that we may be able to say with St. Paul: "Jesus Christ is my life;"‡ "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me?"§

At the moment when the priest pronounces the words of consecration, the change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ takes place instantaneously and wholly: thus, under the influence of grace, should our conversion be instantaneous and entire.

The sacramental species remain without their natural

* Mass of the Blessed Sacrament. † Hymn, *Sacris Solemnis.*

† Philipp., i. 21. § Gal., ii. 20.

substances, being sustained and preserved but by a miracle : let us learn thence to disengage our hearts from creatures and from ourselves, to live only in God and for God.

Jesus, in the Holy Eucharist, makes no exterior use of his senses ; he is there in an apparent state of death ; his body resides there with all the qualities of a glorious body. Ah ! let us remember that we ought to keep our senses in check, turn aside our eyes from the vanities of the world, close our ears to its reports, remain in retirement and silence, die to ourselves, be in a state of sacrifice, and thus announce the death of our Lord.*

Let us remember that we ought to express in our persons the qualities of the glorious body of Jesus ; its brightness, by our edifying conduct ; its agility, by our promptitude to do the will of God ; its subtlety, by a courage that will enable us to triumph over the difficulties we encounter ; its impassability, by our patience under the trials of life.

Jesus Christ has veiled the qualities of his glorious body in the blessed sacrament ; but he wishes that they should be manifested in those who receive it, and that thus they should testify how truly they live by his life, and make but one with him.

The words, "Eucharist," "holy sacrament," "sacred host," "communion," "bread of angels," as well as all others by which this ineffable gift of heaven to earth is represented, awaken the most salutary thoughts, and excite the most religious sentiments. The first of those

* 1 Cor., xi. 26.

names, for instance, signifies *thanksgiving*:—now, can we hear it pronounced, or pronounce it ourselves, without remembering the homage of praise we owe to God for all the favors his goodness has heaped on us, and above all for that of the adorable sacrament of the altar? Ought not that name to strike our hearts, as the rod of Moses struck the rock of Horeb, and call from it the abundant and pure waters of gratitude and love.

The whiteness of the altar linen tells us that we should go there in innocence, and that we should not approach the holy table but with a conscience cleansed from every grievous stain. The elevation of the altar and tabernacle reminds us what exalted sentiments those should possess who receive Jesus Christ, and who, by holy communion, are made to carry God.

The consecration of the chalice and the blessing of the ciborium, admirably teach us the respect we ought to have for our body which is so often the abode of Jesus Christ, and which is, in reality, holier than the sacred vessels. They speak to us equally of the respect we ought to have for our neighbor who has been consecrated to God by baptism, and in whom Jesus Christ resides.

“I am no longer astonished,” says a pious author, “that a Christian is commanded to respect himself and to respect his brethren; I am no longer astonished that God treats us with respect, for by the sacraments, and above all by that of the Holy Eucharist, we are the adjuncts of the body of Jesus Christ: we continue in ourselves the mystery of the Incarnation.”*

* Monseigneur Landriot.

The lamp of the sanctuary has also its language, and instructs us in the faith, love, and piety, that ought to characterize the souls who are devout towards the most blessed sacrament.

Oh! how well she understood it! that virgin† so favored by Jesus in the blessed sacrament, and who, speaking of what she experienced when alone at night before the blessed sacrament, says: "How happy I was in the presence of our good Savior! How many joys are tasted, how many lights are received at the feet of the Eternal! There, I was not only enlightened by the light of the lamp which, while being consumed before God, reminded me that I, too, should burn and be consumed in his presence, to honor by my entire destruction the greatness and sovereignty of my Creator."

Yes, a voice issues from the tabernacle and from all around it, that unceasingly speaks to the faithful soul of God with us—a voice that calls it to the practice of the virtues by which we are made more agreeable to the divine Spouse, and less unworthy of his consolations and the superabundance of his graces.

APPLICATION.

How precious are the lessons we learn from the Holy Eucharist and all that has reference to its holy worship! Let us listen to them with attention and good will; let us repeat them to the souls whom it is our duty to instruct; but, above all, let us practise them with fidelity and perseverance.

* Marie Eustelle.

Who will do this, if not we Religious, who are called so frequently to meditate on the wonders of the adorable Eucharist, to nourish our spirit with the teachings which divine wisdom there gives us ?

Let us then sincerely put our hand to the work. Let us begin this very instant to lead a life of charity, self-denial, gratitude, purity, and piety, by which we shall do what the Lord requires of us.

Oh, how we shall applaud ourselves for such conduct on the day when it will be said to us : “ Good and faithful, because thou hast done the will of thy Master, come to receive the reward of thy fidelity: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ! ”*

PRAAYER.

O God of the Eucharist, adorable Master, how sublime are thy teachings, and how salutary thy lessons ! O thou who art the way, the truth, and the life,† grant by thy grace, that I may in every thing act only according to thy wishes, and that following faithfully in thy footsteps, and keeping myself united to thee, I may come through thee to the abode of eternal life. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 343.)

* St. Matt., xxv. 21.

† St. John, xiv. 6.

THIRTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST—THE SOURCE OF CONCORD.

“For we being many are one bread, one body, all who partake of one bread.”—1 Cor., x. 17.

CONSIDERATION.

THE Holy Eucharist, as the fathers teach, is the most fruitful source of peace and concord among the faithful.

The divine Savior, who made himself our victim, our food, our shepherd, our Emmanuel, says to us from his tabernacle what he said to the apostles on the night of the last supper: “This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.”* He addresses the same prayer to his heavenly Father, and says: “Holy Father, keep them in thy name whom thou hast given me; that they may be one, as we also are.”†

His whole action on souls is to make them partakers in the sentiments of goodness, love, and generosity, that filled his heart in that hour of ineffable love when, about to be delivered to his enemies, he gave himself to men under the sacramental veils. What he wishes, and what he leads us to by all the graces which flow

* St. John, xv. 12.

† *Ibid.*, xvii. 11.

from the altar, is that we love one another with the purest, the most sincere, the most affectionate, the most beneficent, and the most disinterested love; that we not only do not keep any resentment and voluntary antipathy against any one whomsoever, but that we open our heart even to our greatest enemies.

Ah! is it not sufficient to consider the nature of his sacrament, to understand what was his design?

The Holy Eucharist is the testament of the new covenant made in favor of the Church, and sealed by the effusion of his divine blood shed on Calvary: now, the aim of every last will prepared wisely, is to maintain union among the members of the family, to prevent whatever might injure good harmony among them.

The Holy Eucharist is God with us: but God is infinite charity commanding reciprocal love and assistance; he is our good Father wishing that all his children should make but one with him.

The Holy Eucharist is Jesus Christ, the Prince of peace,* continuing his mission; whose object is to unite what was separated, to form but one heart and one soul of all hearts and souls.

The Holy Eucharist is the perpetual immolation of him who, for love of us, became the victim of our reconciliation with God, and through whom alone we can hope for eternal life. Now, he tells us to give him in the person of his brethren the love and gratitude we owe him, and to forgive as we wish to be forgiven.

Ah! at that thought, how could we still cherish any

* Isa., ix. 6.

rancor, any resentment ! Behold me, says our amiable Master to us, a victim for your sins, and soliciting your pardon, but at the same time I ask of you to pardon your brother. If, on one side, I place myself between you and the justice of my Father, I interpose myself between your brother and you, saying to you : Forgive him and love him !

O Jesus, adorable Victim ! who could resist you, and not comply with your precept of charity and forgiveness of injuries ? And against whom could we close our hearts, when yours is open to us ?

What ! we see the Son of God, the sovereign Lord, judge all men worthy of his love and kindness, and call them to a union with himself ! and could there be any among them whom we should judge unworthy of our friendship, and to whom, while he says to them with the gentlest love, “Come to me,”* we should say, “Do not approach me ?”

Would not that be denying our divine Master ? It would also be excluding us from his holy table : “For,” says St. Augustine, “whoever approaches the altar without having banished from his heart all sentiments contrary to peace, finds there a deplorable death instead of life. The Eternal Father disavows him, the Son disinherits him, the Holy Ghost rejects him as a corrupt member, cut off from the body of Jesus Christ.” “The Holy Eucharist,” says St. Chrysostom, “is a mystery of peace ; to participate in it, it is necessary to be exempt from the least enmity.”

* St. Matt., xi. 28.

Jesus Christ himself instructs us in the necessity of that disposition : “If thou offerest thy gift at the altar,” says he, “and there shalt remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”*

The Holy Eucharist is the family repast of the Church of Jesus Christ, the participation of the faithful in the same spiritual food, the banquet of union in which the differences of age, fortune, and knowledge, disappear, and where all divisions should terminate, all oppositions cease, and leave but universal and beneficent charity.

The Holy Eucharist is the divine banquet prefiguring the eternal banquet of the elect. Now, in heaven the elect live in union, loving each other with a perfect love : let our sentiments towards our neighbor be an image of their sentiments towards each other.

Yes, let us love each other cordially in Jesus Christ, and let us thus do what he requires of us, and which he makes known to us by the Church and her doctors.

“We are,” says St. Paul, “one body, all who partake of one bread.”†

“Although many,” says St. Cyril of Alexandria, “we form but one in Jesus Christ. He has found a means conformable to the will of his Father and his own wisdom, to unite us among ourselves and with God ; that means his own body, which, being communicated to all at the mystical table, makes of us all one and the same body among each other and with him.”

* St. Matt., v. 23, 24.

† 1 Cor., x. 17.

“The Holy Eucharist,” says St. John Damascene, “is justly called communion, because it is the means of our union with Jesus Christ, and also of our union with each other.”

“Jesus Christ willed,” says the Council of Trent,* “that the Holy Eucharist should be the symbol of that union of that body of which he is the head, and in which he wishes that we should be united as members closely connected and joined together, so that we may all confess the same thing, and that there may be no schisms or divisions among us.”

“The love of Jesus Christ,” says the Church in her office of Holy Thursday, “has made only one of us all. Let us love each other very sincerely, and keep ourselves from being divided in heart, for we are all united together to make but one body. Ah! let discords and civil quarrels then cease, and let Jesus our God dwell in the midst of us.”

APPLICATION.

Let us remember in every circumstance that we are brethren, that we pray together at the foot of the same holy altar, that we sit at the same sacred table to eat the same heavenly bread; that the same blood flows in our veins, and that that blood is the blood of the Lamb of peace and charity.

Let there be, then, the sincerest and most cordial affection among us, springing from the purest motives of faith. Let us love our brothers to obey Jesus Christ,

* Sess., xiii. ch. 2.

who commands us to do so, to rejoice his heart in fulfilling his precept, to render him a homage of love in the person of those whom he has made his representatives in our regard.

Let us cherish and perfect the love of charity which should reign among us. Let us draw it from the strictest union with the heart of Jesus Christ, who is its ever active, ever superabundant source. Let us know how, for the sake of peace, to renounce our own opinions, personal views, and peculiarities. Let us patiently endure the failings of each other. Let us not allow ourselves any want of respect towards our neighbor, his person, or reputation. Let us love each other with an affectionate and generous love, manifesting itself by sacrifices and devotedness.

By such conduct we shall gladden the heart of Jesus, and bring upon ourselves, our institute, and families, the most abundant blessings.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, God of love! cast thine eyes upon thy servants prostrate before thee, and deign to take from their hearts all egotism, all coldness, all that could destroy the union they ought to have with one another. Give us, O Lord! thy spirit of charity, and grant that, after having fed together on the same bread at the same altar, we may all live with the same heart until we shall be called to the abode of happiness where the union of the elect is consummated with thee. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 344.)

THIRTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

FAITH IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“We walk by faith and not by sight.”—2 Cor., v. 7.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us always profess towards the Holy Eucharist the most entire, the most unalterable, the most humble, the most submissive, and the most lively faith.

Let us believe, regarding that mystery and others, all that has been revealed; and let us believe it firmly, for our faith rests on the word of the God of truth, and on the perpetual and universal teaching of the Church which is infallible.

Jesus Christ himself has said: “The bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world . . . for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.”* “This is my body; this is my blood.”† “Do this for a commemoration of me.”‡

“There is nothing clearer or more precise,” says St. Hilary, “than these words the last of which were pronounced in the most solemn circumstances, and which, constituting the last will of our Savior, ought, like every word of a last will, to be taken in a literal sense.

* St. John, vi. 52, 56.

† St. Matt., xxvi. 26, 28.

‡ St. Luke, xxii. 19.

According to the Son of God himself, it is the reality of his flesh and blood that exists beneath the sacramental species. Thus the Church, which is the pillar of truth, teaches: thus all the saints proclaim with her, and all the doctors of all ages and all countries."

"Let us conform in all things to the word of God," says St. Chrysostom, speaking of the Holy Eucharist; "and let us be careful not to contradict it, although what it teaches may appear to us contrary to our reason and senses; let the authority of the holy Scripture prevail over that which reason and our senses may lead us to think: the latter are subject to error, whilst God's word cannot deceive us."

"What you do not understand," says the Church, "what you do not see, a lively faith attests without regard to the order of nature."*- In another place, she puts in our mouth these words of the Angel of the schools: "My heart submits wholly to you, O God hidden under these species! Sight, touch, and taste are here at fault: hearing alone secures my faith. I believe all that the Son of God has said: nothing is truer than the word of truth itself."†

Let us never admit the shadow of a doubt as to the presence of Jesus Christ in his sacrament, nor on any other truths belonging to it: that would be to outrage him in a manner most afflicting to his sacred heart. "Those," says St. Cyril of Alexandria, "will be justly reckoned guilty of the greatest of crimes, who dare by their incredulity to attack the Creator of all things, and who,

* From the *Lauda Sion*.

† Hymn, *Adoro te*.

in what he chooses to do, have the audacity to ask *how*. . . . That way of speaking is in this case a blasphemy, since God has the power of doing what he wills. If you persist, O Jew, in bringing forward this *how*, I shall ask you in my turn *how* the rod of Moses was changed into a serpent, *how* the waters were changed into blood. . . . Ah ! let our faith then be entire and exempt from all curiosity."

"Why," says St. Chrysostom, "strive to sound what is unfathomable ? Why seek to understand the incomprehensible and to penetrate the impenetrable ?" The senses are confounded, reason humiliated ; but that even is the merit of our faith and gives glory to God.

This mystery, so far above reason, is in some sense understood by the heart. "Man," says Father McCarthy, "cannot find the *how*, but his heart can conceive the *why*. Whoever knows all the extent of the word *love*, knows that the love of Jesus for men must have led him to remain always personally with them, to unite himself to them, and to identify himself with them as much as he could. The more the Holy Eucharist perplexes reason, the more it satisfies the heart. The love and power of God sufficiently explain all things regarding this ; and whoever says with the beloved disciple, 'We have known and have believed the charity which God hath to us,'* immediately adds : I believe in the august and divine sacrament, the masterpiece of that love."

Let us from the very depth of this mystery draw an

* 1 St. John, iv. 16.

additional motive for believing in it, and let us say with St. Hilary, as well as with St. Teresa and St. Francis of Sales : "The more impenetrable, O Lord ! the veils are that hide thee, the more they proclaim thy presence to me. The obscurity that fills me with astonishment is one more proof ; and it is chiefly by those things which I do not understand that I recognize thy divinity."

Let our faith in the Holy Eucharist be lively and practical ; let us be penetrated with respect, love, and devotion towards this divine sacrament ; let it bind our hearts to the holy tabernacle ; let it keep us intimately united to Jesus Christ, and make us live by his life.

Let it work in us what it wrought in the saints. Oh ! what were their transports of joy, admiration, and love, at the sight of the adorable sacrament of the altar ! Did they not seem to contemplate unveiled the divine reality hidden under the sacred species ?

Let us listen to St. Thomas Aquinas crying out at sight of the Holy Viaticum : "I believe firmly that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is in this great sacrament. I adore thee, O my God and my Savior ! I receive thee who art the price of my redemption and the victim of my pilgrimage—*thee !* for the love of whom I have studied, labored, preached, and taught."

Let us contemplate St. Jerome in the same circumstances. As soon as he saw the priest approach his dwelling, he caused himself to be laid on the bare ground, and gathering the little strength left him he knelt down, made a profound obeisance, struck his breast ; then he received the body of Jesus Christ in such sentiments of

devotion, that already he appeared not to belong to this world.

Moreover, all the saints have acted in the same manner, and have believed with the most perfect faith in the presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. All have said with St. Liguori: "O my God and my all! I believe thou art present in this most holy sacrament, although concealed from the eyes of the flesh. I recognize thee by the light of faith under the consecrated host, and I adore thee there, O Monarch of heaven and earth, and Savior of the world!"

APPLICATION.

Let us appreciate the happiness of believing in the Holy Eucharist. Let us bless our God for having given us the grace to submit our intellect entirely to the light of revelation.

Let us weep for those who dare to raise doubts as to this holy mystery: oh! how culpable and unhappy they are! They assign limits to a power and love that are unlimited, they, in act, blaspheme Jesus Christ and his Church which they make capable of error or lying; they withdraw from God, and enter on a path of darkness whose end is damnation.

As to us, let us always act as if we visibly beheld Jesus Christ in this sacrament.

Let us manifest our faith in the Holy Eucharist by our collectedness in Church, by our piety during the holy mass, by our zeal to make the holy sacrament known, loved, and adored, and to lead souls to the dif-

ferent practices of that devotion, and particularly to the practice of frequent communion.

Should it happen that the devil suggests thoughts contrary to our faith in that mystery, let us reject them in their very beginning with scorn. Such is the advice given by St. Francis of Sales: "Should some doubt or temptation," says he, "come to us, let us answer it only with scorn, without any subtlety or reasoning."

Let us recognize, adore, and bless God with us; let us approach him with faith, confidence, and love, and by his grace we shall merit to have the words fulfilled in us which were spoken by our divine Lord to his apostles: "Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed."*

PRAYER.

Prostrate before thy tabernacle, we adore thee, O God, whom love keeps a prisoner in it. Yes, thou art there beholding us, listening to us, speaking to us, and communicating to us the treasures of thy grace: thou art there giving us thyself!

Deign, O sweet Savior! to add to thy benefits that of increasing my faith. Grant that, like the disciples of Emmaus, we may recognize thee in the breaking of bread; and that glorifying thee by an entire, unalterable, docile, lively, and practical faith, we may come through it to the clear vision of what it reveals to us under the veils of thine adorable sacrament.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 344.)

* St. John, xx. 29.

THIRTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

OUR DUTIES TOWARDS THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“Come let us adore and fall down, and weep before the Lord that made us.”—Ps., xciv. 6.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us offer to the Holy Eucharist, and, as far as depends on us, let us cause others to offer to it, a true worship of adoration, love, gratitude, and prayer.

Let us believe, mind and heart, in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the most holy sacrament, and let us adore his sacred body under the species by which it is hidden from our eyes. He is our Creator, our sovereign Master, our Redeemer! he of whom it is written: “Let all the angels of God adore him.”* “All nations shall serve him.”† . . . “All the kindred of the Gentiles shall adore in his sight.”‡

He is here, whom Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the Magi, the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna, and the prince of the apostles, recognized and acknowledged as their Lord and their God.

Here is that sacred flesh which is hypostatically united to the Word—that flesh, the source of our spiritual life and our immortality—that flesh which was sacrificed

* Heb., 1. 6.

† Ps., lxxi. 11.

‡ *Ibid.*, xxi. 28.

for us at Jerusalem, where it was covered with humiliations and outrages.

“Where shall we adore him with more reason than in the Holy Eucharist, since he is in this sacrament which God has given us, to animate us to the life of grace, and vivify us according to the spirit ?”* “Yes, my brethren,” says St. Ambrose; “we adore the flesh of our Redeemer, and we adore it in the mysteries which he himself has instituted, and which are celebrated each day upon our altars.”

Let us render to Jesus, in the blessed sacrament, the tribute of our perfect dependence, and repeat with the heavenly spirits: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and divinity, and wisdom, and strength and honor, and glory and benediction.”†

To adoration let us join our love; for if we must respect and venerate from the depth of our souls the God of heaven dwelling upon earth, we must likewise do him homage with all the affections of our hearts.

Let us listen to him saying to us from his tabernacle: “My son, give me thy heart.”‡ “What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways, and love him, and serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.”§ “Fear not: I am thy brother, thy friend, thy guide, thy salvation.”||

Let us respond to his invitation; let us strive to love him beneath the mysterious veil which hides him from

* Bourdaloue. † Apoc., v. 12. ‡ Prov., xxiii. 26.

§ Deut., x. 12. || Esth., xv. 12.

our sight, as we shall love him in heaven when we shall contemplate his infinite beauty as it is. Let us act conformably to this exhortation of a soul that seemed to have lived only for the blessed sacrament : “Let us be consumed in the Eucharistic flame ; let us have no soul, mind, heart, intention, or love, but for the Holy Eucharist. Let our whole being be a continual outpouring towards this unknown Jesus, hidden so lovingly in the prison of the tabernacle. Let him be always our joy, our peace, our end. Let us give him love for love : the laws that unite us to him do not suffer us to love him in a common and ordinary way. Let us love him on earth to the end of our days, so as to die in the exercise of holy love.” *

Let us bless him for the institution of this most holy sacrament, and for all the graces that flow to us from it. Oh ! how generous he has been in our regard, and to what an excess his love for us has carried him ! Ah ! is it not of us that he might say : “ What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it ? ” † “ Has he not for us exhausted his power, his wisdom, and his goodness ? The greatness of our gratitude ought then, in some sort, to annihilate all the powers of our soul.” ‡

Yes, every Christian ought to be animated towards the Author of the Holy Eucharist, with the most lively, entire, and affectionate gratitude, and to say with the author of the *Imitation* : § “ O most sweet and bountiful

* Marie Eustelle. † Isa., v. 4. ‡ Marie Eustelle.

§ Book iv. ch. ii. 2; xi. 5.

Jesus, how great reverence and thanks with perpetual praise are due to thee for the receiving of thy sacred body, whose dignity no tongue can sufficiently express ! I bless thee, O Lord Jesus ! who, to manifest thy love to the whole world, hast prepared a great supper wherein thou hast set before us, not the figurative Lamb to be eaten, but thy own most sacred flesh. O ineffable goodness ! O boundless love ! with which man has been singularly favored. I thank thee, O Jesus, eternal shepherd ! who hast deigned to feed us poor exiles with thy precious body and blood, and to invite us with thine own mouth to the reception of these divine mysteries."

From motives of love and gratitude, let us be filled with zeal for the worship of the Holy Eucharist, and let all our ambition be to raise up and form adorers of the most holy sacrament, to lead the souls entrusted to us to the divine shepherd, to give them a relish for the heavenly food he has prepared for them. Ah ! if we understood the ardor of the love of Jesus, with what zeal and affection we should employ ourselves to gain hearts to him, to make all embrace practices of devotion to his sacrament of love !

But here, let us remember that, as Religious and teachers, we ought to tend to that end, and above all by our example.

Let our whole life testify our devotion to the Holy Eucharist. Let us assist in Church with edification and recollection, in imitation of the saints, and in particular, of St. Louis, King of France, who, prostrate before the King of kings, appeared as an angel under a mortal

body that had come on earth to show the respect due to the most holy sacrament.

Let us assist at mass every day and with the most animated piety; let us communicate often and prepare ourselves for it each time with the greatest care; let us increase the number of our visits to the blessed sacrament, our spiritual communions, our acts of reparation and devotedness towards Jesus in the most holy sacrament.

Let us respect priests and honor them through whose ministry the Son of God becomes incarnate, and offers himself mystically, and gives himself to us to be the food of our souls.

Let us live in Jesus in the most holy sacrament; let all our thoughts, love, and inclinations, be centred in him; let everything in us, our words, looks, demeanor, and labor, show that he truly abides and acts in our hearts, working out our sanctification by his grace, and thus preparing us for an everlasting union with him.

APPLICATION.

How sweet and how profitable it is to enter into the practices of devotion to the Holy Eucharist! What consolation and what treasures of grace the soul finds in her relations with God who is with us! How could we seek elsewhere the joys which our heart needs, and which it calls for unceasingly?

It is there they exist, as the saints experienced, and as we shall experience, if we have their great devotion and zeal for the most holy sacrament, if we share, for

instance, the admirable dispositions of St. Liguori when he says: "O Lord Jesus! enkindle in me an ardent desire to remain always in thy presence, at the foot of thine altars, to keep company there with thee, to receive thee in my heart. Oh, deign to attract me towards thee by the perfumes of thy sacred beauty, and by the infinite love thou dost manifest in the most holy sacrament!"

Animated by the same sentiments, let us adore, love, and glorify the divine Eucharist which shall be our strength, our peace, our joy, the whole time of our pilgrimage, and whose virtue will make us attain to eternal happiness.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, holy Victim! accept my homage of adoration, love, and gratitude. O amiable Savior, may my heart be consumed with love of thee! If thy saints felt inflamed at the sight of a simple flower in the fields, with what flames should my heart burn at the contemplation of the Eucharist,—that mystery of a God residing with us, sacrificing himself for us, giving himself to us, asking of us only to strive to love him as he loves us.

O generous Lord! who hast lavished so many favors on me by thine adorable sacrament, complete the work of thy clemency! Grant that by thy grace I may unceasingly increase in charity, until thou art pleased to admit me to that land of happiness where those who have loved thee enjoy thee now for ever!

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 345.)

THIRTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

EXCELLENCE OF DEVOTION TO THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.”—
Apoc., i. 8.

CONSIDERATION.

DEVOTION to the Eucharist is in the spiritual world what the sun is in the natural. No other is more sublime, more salutary, more consoling, more universal, and more necessary.

“Devotion to the Holy Eucharist is the worship of the living presence of Jesus Christ on earth; and hence,” says Father Faber, “it has in its object a greatness, a solemnity, a seal of gravity and truth, to which nothing can approach.”

The faithful soul that, with true piety, embraces its different practices is in the closest communication with the Deity: he visits, adores, loves, b'lesses, and receives in him the Incarnate Word in whom the Father finds his delight, and who is the splendor and joy of the heavenly Jerusalem; he has the sweetest, most intimate relations with the Emmanuel; like Moses on Sinai, he speaks face to face with the Lord; like St. John in the cœnacu-

lum, he leans upon the breast of his divine Master, he unites with Jesus Christ so as to become one with him in mind, heart, and body : ah ! what can be conceived greater or more sublime ?

Devotion to the Holy Eucharist makes us lead here below the life of the blessed in heaven. Therefore, St. Teresa, appearing after her death to one of her Religious, said to her : "Inhabitants of heaven and inhabitants of earth, we should be one and the same thing in purity and love : we, in enjoying, and you, in suffering. What we do in heaven with the divine essence, you should do on earth with the holy sacrament."

Who can tell the efficacy of devotion to the Holy Eucharist ? What a salutary influence it exercises over individuals, families, and societies ! It is the most active principle for spreading and developing piety, charity, gratitude, zeal, humility, self-denial in souls, a spirit of sacrifice, and all the moral and religious virtues. It is through it that Christian heroism, under whatever form it appears, takes birth and grows strong ; it is through it we can explain the courage of martyrs, the zeal of apostles, the purity of virgins, the miracles of charity on the part of Religious consecrated to God, in the service of their neighbor.

Devotion to the Holy Eucharist puts the plenitude of the treasures of heaven at our disposal. It causes streams of the precious blood which is the salvation of the world, to flow upon us from the heart of Jesus. It detaches our hearts from created things ; it inspires us with disgust for earthly pleasures. It elevates us

above our nature, and in heart makes us like to the angels.

“Behold,” says St. Liguori, “the source of all good, Jesus in the sacrament of his love. ‘If any man thirst,’ says he, ‘let him come to me and drink;’* and it is thus that these words of the prophet are fulfilled: ‘You shall draw waters, with joy, out of the Savior’s fountains.’†

“Ah! if men hastened to the Holy Eucharist to seek there a remedy for their evils, they would assuredly not be as unhappy as they are. Why then, O children of Adam, do you complain of your miseries when you have so near you, in the holy sacrament, the means of remedying them?”

Devotion to the Holy Eucharist procures the holiest and sweetest joys. “Oh! if it is sweet,” says St. Liguori, in another place, “to find one’s self with a friend dear to the heart, how much better is it in this valley of tears to find one’s self with Jesus, the best, the most loving of friends! Behold how in the holy sacrament we can converse with him at pleasure, open to him our heart, treat in all confidence and the most intimate familiarity with that King of kings!”

Ah! who among us has not experienced the sweetness that the pious soul tastes of in her intercourse with Jesus in the most blessed sacrament? What day is engraven on the memory of Catholics as the happiest of their life, but that of their first communion? What moments do we best love to recall, if not those in which

* St. John, vii. 37.

† Isa., xii. 3.

we have received the bread of angels, or such as we have passed prostrated before the holy tabernacle, pouring forth our heart into that of Jesus, and receiving the impression of his grace ?

Devotion to the Holy Eucharist is, in its essential practices, absolutely necessary. Let us recall what Jesus himself has said : " Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you."* Let us bear in mind that the Church commands us, under pain of mortal sin, to assist at mass on Sundays and holydays, to make the Easter communion within the appointed time, and to communicate in form of viaticum when in danger of death by sickness : she does not wish to look upon those as her children who, in these last respects, would refuse to listen to her voice.

Yes, devotion to the Holy Eucharist is essential, as our spiritual necessities sufficiently demonstrate. What is it you need, O men ! in this abode of struggles, sufferings, and tears ?—strength against the enemies of your salvation, patience under your misfortunes, peace, confidence, and hope. But where can you find these advantages, but in your union with the strong and mighty God, with him who has taken our infirmities on himself, and who pours the wine and oil of his grace upon our wounds ? Go then to the Holy Eucharist : every thing is there, and the infinite treasures exist only there !

Devotion to the Holy Eucharist is most universal. It belongs to all countries, all generations, and all ages.

* St. John, vi. 54.

It is suitable for all ranks, all states, all professions, and all temperaments. It is the delight of childhood, the strength of youth, the consolation of age. Christians who receive the holy viaticum on the bed of death, perform an act which is practically essential: after their departure from this world, it is of precious assistance to them, through masses offered up and communions received for the repose of their soul.

Ah! how can we reflect on the excellence of devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and not praise it, love it, propagate it, embrace it with ardor, and say to all as well as to ourselves: "Let us be entirely taken up with the Holy Eucharist, that ocean of all good things; let us repose under the shadow of our blessed Savior, until the day when, tearing aside the veil that hid him from our eyes, we shall be permitted, with our head resting on his bosom, to behold him in all the splendor of his glory!"*

APPLICATION.

Let us be wholly devoted to the blessed sacrament, and let nothing be so dear to us as the practices connected with it.

Let us communicate as frequently as permitted by obedience, bringing to this holy action the most saintly dispositions. Let us hunger for the bread of heaven, and hasten to the table from which it is dispensed.

Let us assist at the holy sacrifice with faith, piety, recollection, and an ardent desire to glorify the Father

* Marie Eustelle, Letter 210.

through the Son who becomes a victim for our sins, and to profit by the spiritual riches of which the holy sacrifice is the inexhaustible source. Let us think on the souls in purgatory, and implore the divine mercy for them through the blood of the Savior.

Let us visit the holy sacrament as often as our occupations leave it in our power. As Religious, we are the courtiers of the sovereign King : let it, then, be our happiness to keep him company in the sanctuary where he resides. Let us fix our habitation where his love has induced him to fix his. Like Moses, let us have recourse in all our difficulties to his tabernacle : there is the sacred fire that should enlighten and inflame souls.

Let us frequently make a spiritual communion ; let us give glory to Jesus in the blessed sacrament by our adorations, our supplications, and acts of reparation ; let us glorify him also by a true zeal for his worship in the Holy Eucharist. As Christian teachers, can we have a nobler end than to make our pupils esteem, love, and practise that devotion which is the queen of devotions, the source of all strength for virtue, and the key of the treasures of heaven ?

PRAYER.

O Jesus in the blessed sacrament ! be thou alone my thought, my desire, my love. Yes, I wish to live only by thee and for thee : nothing shall be sweeter to me than to visit thee in thy tabernacle, to receive thee, to make thee known, loved, and blessed by the souls confided to me.

Grant, I beseech thee, that I may unceasingly make progress in devotion to thy sacred body, so that I may glorify thee on earth according to the desires of thy sacred heart, and that I may be admitted, after death, to contemplate it in heaven in all the splendor of its infinite beauty.

(See Résumés, page 345.)

THIRTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

HOLY COMMUNION.

“A certain man made a great supper and invited many.”—
St. Luke, xiv. 16.

CONSIDERATION.

How can we express the excellence of holy Communion? How can we speak worthily of that banquet wherein God exhibits the treasures of his power, wisdom, and goodness for men.

The Eucharistic banquet is great because of its Author and of the food there provided. Let us remember that he who has spread this mysterious table, and who invites us to it, is the sovereign Master of all things; he who by a word created the universe, and whose infinite majesty all creatures visible and invisible revere!

“Consider,” says St. John Chrysostom to us, “what an honor is done you, and to what a table you are admitted. He whom the angels look upon tremblingly, whom they do not dare to gaze upon face to face, because of the brightness that radiates from his countenance—he it is on whom we are invited to nourish ourselves, with whose substance we mingle our own, so as to become one body, one and the same flesh with

him. Ah ! ‘Who shall declare the powers of the Lord ? who shall set forth all his praises ?’*

“That which is furnished to us in this banquet is the body of him who is seated in the highest place in heaven, and who is adored by the angels. Here is a royal table : angels are its ministers, the King himself is there present.

“O miracle ! O inexhaustible goodness of God ! he who is throned on the right hand of the Father rests in your hands at the solemn hour of our mysteries, and gives himself to whoever wishes to receive him !”

To what shall we compare this food provided for us at the table of the Lord ? It is infinitely superior to the bread of Elias, to the manna of the desert, to the tree of life. It is of this fruit it is said : “Aser, his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield dainties to Kings.”† “What is the good thing of him, and what is his beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect and wine springing forth virgins ?”‡

That food is what the angels and saints of God nourish themselves with ; it is the food which preserves life, the delight of God himself. O mystery of the mysteries of love ! The everlasting food of the table of the sovereign King is the daily food of his servants ! “The bread of angels,” says the Church, “becomes the bread of men. O unheard of prodigy ! The supreme Master of all things gives himself to his poor and miserable creatures to be their food !”§—“O sacred banquet

* Ps., cv. 2.

† Gen., xl ix. 20.

‡ Zach., ix. 17.

§ Hymn, *Sacris.*

wherein Jesus Christ himself is received, in which the memory of his passion is renewed, where the soul is filled with graces, and a pledge of future glory is given to us !”*

The Eucharistic banquet is great in its effects. It is the life of the Church ; it establishes and maintains among the members of that holy society, peace, union, concord, everything that constitutes its strength and beauty.

It is equally the life of the faithful. It is there indeed, says Louis of Grenada, that man is visited by God and honored with his presence ; there that he becomes a living temple of the body of Jesus Christ ; there that grace is given to him in greatest abundance ; there that the divine sweetness is tasted in its source, and the fire of charity burns most ardently.

The Holy Ghost has said that the Lord would feed the just man “with the bread of life and understanding, . . . and give him the waters of wholesome wisdom to drink.”† Now, it is at the Eucharistic table that these words are fulfilled. “There,” says the holy Council of Trent, “we find the remedy for our tepidity and weakness, the expiation of our daily faults, and a preservative against sin.”‡

“That sacrament,” says St. John Damascene, “obtains for those who approach it with faith and love, the remedy for their sins, eternal life, the good of their souls and even of their bodies.”

“Experience,” says St. Francis of Sales, “has made

* Antiphon, *O Sacrum.* † Eccl., xv. 3. ‡ Sess. xiii. ch. 2.

me sensible of the all-powerful virtue of this divine sacrament in strengthening hearts, in inclining them to good, exempting them from evil, consoling them, and making them angelic on this earth, provided it is approached with suitable faith, purity, and devotion."

Moreover, all the doctors of the Church speak in the same strains, and teach us that in holy communion we find armor against the fiery darts of Satan, a diminution of concupiscence, a disgust for things of earth and the proper understanding of those of heaven, the germ of immortality, the seed of a glorious resurrection, our hope, our strength, our salvation, and our life.*

All proclaim that the Holy Eucharist is a gift filled with an extraordinary and sublime grace; that all the treasures of the divine goodness towards us are contained in it;† that this sacrament raises man, if we may say so, to an equality with the angels; that it heals the soul, consoles, strengthens, and enriches it; that it establishes us in the closest union with the Savior God who said: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him."‡

The Eucharistic banquet is great in its extent, its duration, and the number of guests that partake of it. Its tables are prepared from one end of the world to the other. It commenced more than eighteen centuries ago, and will not cease till the end of time. All generations of mankind may in turn take their place at it. All men are invited to it, though alas! numbers refuse to participate in it.

* St. Cyril of Alexandria. † St. Chrysostom. ‡ St. John, vi. 57.

The feast of Assuerus was rich and splendid, but it lasted only seven days; that which God prepared for the Jewish people in the desert ceased at the end of forty years: but that which was prepared for the new people of God will last as long as the world.

The Eucharistic banquet is great by what it has cost. Let us remember that it is at the price of the blood of God that the divine table has been furnished whereon the food of eternal life is served to us, for it was necessary that Christ should be a bloody victim on Mount Calvary, to be afterwards on our altars the unbloody victim of which we participate.

The Eucharistic banquet is great in what it represents. Is it not, in fact, the image of the banquet of the elect in the kingdom of heaven? Does not the partaking of the body of Jesus Christ represent the union with that divine Savior which the saints and angels have, who, beholding him in his glory, live only by him and for him, and find in him an inexhaustible source of the purest joys, a torrent of the sweetest delights, the fulness of a happiness that knows no limit?

APPLICATION.

Let us be convinced that nothing is so great, so sublime, so glorious, as to make a holy communion.

Ah! how can we sufficiently esteem the honor of being admitted to the table of the King of kings, of receiving himself as our food, of being united to him by a union so intimate that human language cannot express it? How can we worthily appreciate the

singular favor of having, even here below, God himself as our inheritance ; of possessing in ourselves the Master of heaven with all the treasures of his graces ; of being changed into him, as the food we take is changed into our substance ; and of seeing fulfilled in our regard these words of Scripture : “ You are gods ! ”*

Let us appreciate the happiness of being able to communicate often, and let it be a motive to make us love our holy state and bless the Author of our vocation.

Let us bring the necessary dispositions to the holy table. All is ready on the part of our divine Savior, who calls all to his banquet : let all be ready on our part, that the divine food may produce its salutary effects in us. These are the nuptials of the Lamb in which the sweetest joy is the inheritance of pure souls.

Let us receive Jesus Christ with faith, devotion, humility, confidence, and love ; and after having received him, let us consecrate ourselves to him without reserve : let us give ourselves to him, as he gives himself to us. Let us persevere afterwards in these dispositions by which, testifying that we live by him and for him, we shall merit to partake of the eternal banquet which constitutes the happiness of heaven.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, generous Savior ! who, in spite of my unworthiness, invitest me to thy divine banquet, grant that, by thy grace, I may approach it with purity of conscience, piety and love, so that the heavenly food of

* Ps., lxxxi. 6.

which I am going to partake, may make me live a truly heavenly life, and that in me these words of the Gospel may be fulfilled : “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God.”*

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 346.)

* St. Luke, xiv. 15.

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION

NECESSITY OF COMMUNION.

“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.”—St. John, vi. 54.

CONSIDERATION.

THERE is nothing better established than the necessity of communion. Jesus Christ teaches it in the most formal manner, saying: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.”

The Holy Eucharist is that banquet spoken of in the Gospel, and which those who were first invited to it declined, under the pretext of business or pleasure now, their refusal offends him who invited them, and he immediately ordered his servants to call other guests: “Go out,” said he to them, “into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled; but I say to you that none of those men that were invited shall taste my supper.”*

We must then sit down to the Eucharistic table, under penalty of incurring the displeasure of the sovereign King, and meriting to be excluded from his

* St. Luke, xiv. 23, 24.

eternal banquet. We must partake of it under penalty of having no life in us, and wounding the heart of Jesus.

Let us listen to the language which a holy bishop puts into the mouth of our divine Savior: "Heavenly spirits, tell the faithful soul that day and night I wait for him to come to the banquet which I have prepared for him. Tell him that I am hidden under the accidents of bread to nourish him, that I wish to contract with him and in his favor a new and so close covenant, that I may belong wholly to him, and he wholly to me. I have gone to an infinite expense to prepare this banquet; I have spared nothing to give him proofs of my affection. I provide for him at the holy table whatever is most delicious on earth or in heaven. As often as he communicates I replenish him with my graces, I transfer to him my merits, I enrich him with my virtues.

"Tell him if he does not eat of this celestial bread, he will die of hunger; that he will have no health, strength, consolation, peace, nor life; that he will be strongly tempted, and will yield to temptation. Tell him, if he continues to excuse himself, and defers to eat at my table, he will never eat of it, neither in this life nor in heaven. Tell him that fear is good, but that love is better: that in keeping at a distance from me, he despises me instead of honoring me, that he afflicts and offends me." *

Who can listen to that language and not answer: "O Lord! who commandest me to partake at thy holy

* The Bishop of Belley.

table, and who threatenest me with thine anger if I do not eat thy flesh and drink thy blood, I shall not so much regard my unworthiness as thy wish, and will approach thee with confidence since thou invitest me with so much goodness."

The Church, the infallible interpreter of Jesus Christ, commands the faithful to communicate, at least, at Easter, under pain of mortal sin, and does not cease to manifest her desire to see them communicate frequently and even daily. All the founders of religious orders, penetrated with the necessity of communion, have prescribed in their rules that it should be received frequently, and have anticipated particular or extraordinary communions in addition to those prescribed by the rules.

Finally, it is sufficient to consider what the Holy Eucharist is, and what our wants are, to be convinced of the necessity of communicating.

The soul, as well as the body, has need of a food conformable to its nature, and which might fully repair the continual loss of its strength and vitality. "Not in bread alone does man live : "* we have need, then, of a spiritual food. Now that food, as the fathers teach, is God himself, communicating himself to us under veils and symbols during our days of exile, and showing himself such as he is during the ages of eternity.

Therefore, the Lord has prepared the Eucharistic table whereon a miraculous food is provided for us, which is no other than the Lord himself. Let us feed ourselves with it; otherwise, our souls shall languish,

* St. Matt., iv. 4.

waste away, and soon become dry and withered members.

The Holy Eucharist is in the spiritual order what bread is in the natural order. It is our strength, our joy, our life. Ah! why should we deprive ourselves of that help? Alas! we should have to repeat with the prophet: "I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered: because I forgot to eat my bread."* We should faint on the way we have to traverse: "For," say St. Cyprian and St. Francis of Assisium, "the soul languishes, grows weak, and falls, when the Holy Eucharist is not there to sustain and animate it."

We are subject to an infinite number of miseries which holy communion remedies. Naturally inclined to sin, we are moreover allured to it by every thing around us. The fire of concupiscence is in our flesh, and that fire is fanned by the weaknesses of our heart, the allurements of the vanities of the world, and the suggestions of Satan. Ah! how can we resist these seductions without communion, and frequent communion? Whence can we draw the strength necessary to subdue our passions, to sacrifice our self-love, and to combat temptations with unflagging energy, if not here?

It is at the holy table we find a counterpoise to concupiscence, for the grace of holy communion is essentially a grace of purity and innocence: the flesh of Jesus Christ, that divine flesh born of the Virgin Mary, weakens our evil propensities, or makes their violence serve but to embellish our triumph and increase our merits.

* Ps., ci. 5.

All the masters of a spiritual life insist on the necessity of communion, and even frequent communion. It was because their great experience made known to them that, for the generality of souls, there could be no solid virtue without the use of this means of sanctification.

“The senses of man,” says the pious author of the *Imitation*,* “are inclined to evil from his youth; and if that divine remedy does not come to his assistance, he soon falls into the greatest excesses. For me who am so often falling and committing sin, and who so quickly grow slack and faint, there is a necessity of renewing myself, purifying myself, and inflaming my heart by prayers, confessions, and fervent communions.”

Every thing urges us, then, to have recourse to the Holy Eucharist, which is the source of all good, and at that fountain of living water to quench the thirst that consumes our souls.

APPLICATION.

Let us from the depth of our hearts love the divine food which our adorable Master has prepared for us. Let us bless him with all the ardor of the most lively gratitude, for having thus provided for our wants with an infinite generosity and solicitude. He has looked down upon us in the desert of this life of fatigues and sufferings, and has said: “I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.”†

Let us make this gift of his goodness known to our

* Book iv. ch. iii. 2, 3.

† St. Matt., xv. 32.

pupils; and speaking to them with the clearest conviction of the necessity of communicating, let us engage them to contract the holy habit of it. Is not that the very essence of the good we are called upon to do, and is there anything so deserving to be an object of our zeal ?

Let us frequently approach the holy table; above all, in times of difficulty. Let us go, as often as obedience permits, to unite ourselves with him who alone is life and happiness; but let us go with faith, purity of conscience, piety. . . and like the saints, we shall experience the efficacy of the bread of angels in making us lead the life of angels upon earth.

PRAYER.

O divine Savior, who commandest me to approach to thee if I wish to have a share in thy gifts, and to receive the food of immortality if I wish to obtain life and eternal glory, I am animated by thy words so full of charity, but at the same time I fear because of my own unworthiness. What then shall I do? Ah! thy heart tells me what to do. I shall go to thee with a sense of my misery and confidence in thy mercy; I shall go to thee as one sick to his physician, as one poor to the King of heaven, as one in grief to his consoler; and receiving thee with humility, I shall participate in the grace of thy sacrament by which I hope to serve thee henceforth with the most entire fidelity, until the day when thou wilt admit me to bless thee with the angels in heaven.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 346.)

THIRTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

FREQUENT COMMUNION.

“Lord, give us always this bread.”—St. John, vi. 34.

CONSIDERATION.

OUR holy rules establish among us the custom of frequent communion. They wish that we should approach the holy table, at least, twice a week; and in that respect they are conformable to the intention of Jesus Christ, to the spirit of the Church, to the doctrine of the fathers, to the examples of the saints, and to what is suitable to us in our holy state.

It is the intention of Jesus Christ that the faithful should communicate frequently,—an intention he has manifested by instituting the Holy Eucharist under the form of food, and by selecting bread and wine as the remote matter of it, which are the ordinary nourishment of mankind. He gives us to understand that it is a food we should make use of, not rarely as we do remedies, but frequently as we do bread and wine which we take every day; and that the physical taking of food being an habitual act for the life of the body, communion should be an ordinary and frequent act for the Christian life.

He requires us to say in the *Pater noster*: “give us this day our daily bread :”*—now the doctors of the Church agree that this means, in the first place, the Eucharistic bread.

O Jesus! who can look at thy heart or recall thy words, without comprehending why thou urgest us to receive thee very frequently ? Ah ! when I hear thee say : “I am the bread of life . . . my flesh is meat indeed ; and my blood is drink indeed :”† . . . “Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you :”‡ . . . “With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer :”§—can I still doubt that thou desirkest to be our habitual food ?

In the early ages, the faithful communicated every day : yet the Church has never said any thing against that custom ; on the contrary, she has not ceased to recommend it.

She has frequent communion so much at heart that, by the sacred Council of Trent, she goes so far as to entreat the faithful by the bowels of the divine mercy, to believe the sacred mysteries of the body and blood of Jesus Christ with such constancy and firmness of faith, and to revere them with so profound a respect, and such piety and devotion of heart, that they may be in a state to frequently receive that supersubstantial bread.|| Finally, invoking the testimony of all christian ages, and of the fathers of the Church, she formally expresses the wish to see all the faithful communicate

* St. Luke, xi. 3. † St. John, vi. 48, 56. ‡ St. Matt., xi. 28.

§ St. Luke, xxii. 15. || Sess., xiii. ch. 8.

sacramentally every time they assist at the holy sacrifice of the mass.*

“Behold the Church which is the same at all times,” says Fenelon, on this subject. “Nothing in her grows old; the same spirit always animates her; she invites all her children to frequent communion.”

Let us quote here some expressions of her holy doctors:—“The Holy Eucharist,” says St. Ambrose, “is our daily bread: receive it every day, if allowed, so that every day it may be profitable to you. The remedy for sin is in the adorable Eucharist, and since I do not cease to sin, I should not cease to take that divine nourishment.” “The Holy Eucharist,” says St. Augustine, “is our daily bread, that which we need to sustain us in this life. Take that divine food as often you are benefited by it; and if every day, take it every day.”

“In the Lord’s prayer,” says St. Jerome, “we ask for the living bread which came down from heaven, so that we may merit to receive, every day in this life, the substantial bread which we shall receive in the next.”

It is in the same sense that St. Hilary, St. Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Gregory the Great, St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Peter Chrysologus, &c., speak on this subject. St. Liguori says: “I am of the opinion of those who recommend frequent communion, for such seems to me not only the primitive custom of the faithful, but the sentiment of the holy fathers and the whole Church.”

Generally speaking, frequent communion has been

* Sess. xxii. ch. 6.

the constant and universal practice of the saints. Their hearts were consumed with the desire of receiving Jesus Christ, and they partook as frequently as possible of his sacred banquet. When they were deprived of it, they lamented as being subjected to a most painful privation. It was because they knew how great is the necessity of this heavenly bread for the nourishment of our soul, and how quickly, when deprived of it, it falls into tepidity, relaxation, and sin.

Let us recall to mind what was the conduct of St. Francis of Assisium, St. Philip Neri, St. Teresa, St. Magdalene of Pazzi, and the blessed Margaret Mary, on that subject.

Ah ! like those seraphic souls, let us be convinced that we cannot cause more joy to the heart of Jesus than by receiving him, and with fruit, in the blessed sacrament. Moreover, is it not in accordance with the spirit of our vocation ? Who, then, next to the priest, ought to participate, more than the Religious, of the Eucharistic banquet ? Our holy state is the continuation, the reproduction, of the life of the first faithful. "They were persevering," says the Scripture, "in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayers."*

The dispositions requisite for frequent communion, evidently exist in every Religious worthy of the name. These conditions are, the state of grace—the only condition absolutely indispensable—the will to correct venial sins, and a true desire to receive the body of our Lord. Now, is not this the condition in which all true

* Acts, ii. 42.

Religious are who by their state tend to perfection, and in whom every thing tends to a relish for the Holy Eucharist ?

Moreover, frequent communion is indispensable. It is a fact of experience, that a Religious who remains away from the holy table leads only a languishing spiritual life, deprived of energy, without perseverance, and without progress ; his poor soul grows weaker from day to day, and soon sinks under the ever increasing efforts of the enemy of our salvation.

APPLICATION.

Let it be our greatest desire to partake frequently, very frequently, of the divine banquet to which the love of Jesus invites us. Let us consider the means of communicating frequently as we do in our holy state, an inappreciable favor. Let us esteem the days of communion greater than all other days ; let us ardently desire their approach ; let us look forward with joy to their arrival ; let us bless God for having thus placed them on our path through life.

Let us make, at least, all the communions that are of rule, and let us add others of devotion, as far as obedience allows. Let us take care not to be among the number of those of whom the author of the *Imitation** speaks, saying : "O deplorable fact ! there are tepid and lukewarm Christians who, lest they should be obliged to keep a stricter watch over themselves, wish their communion deferred. Alas ! how little is their love ;

* Book iv. ch. x. 4, 5.

how cold is their devotion, who so easily dispense themselves from the sacred communion.”*

Let us be well persuaded, that it is only the father of lies who can lead us to keep away from the holy table. Sometimes he hides his malice under a veil of respect. Let us distrust that stratagem; and after being cleansed from our sins, let us show our respect for the God of the Eucharist, chiefly by receiving him with confidence and love.

When necessary, let us encourage ourselves by saying within our hearts these words of St. Francis of Sales: “Two classes of persons need to communicate frequently:—the perfect, because being well disposed, they would do a great wrong not to approach the source and fountain of perfection;—the imperfect, that they may be enabled to attain to perfection;—the strong, that they may not become weak;—the weak, that they may become strong. Imperfect, weak, infirm, I shall approach to the holy table as often as I can, and by nourishing myself with beauty, goodness, and purity itself in that holy sacrament, my soul shall become beautiful, good, and pure, and will merit favor in the eyes of the Lord.”

PRAYER.

Be thou blessed by heaven and earth, O divine Savior! who hast placed before me the daily bread which gives strength, life, and joy to my soul. Grant,

* Book iv. ch. x. 4, 5.

I beseech thee, that I may nourish myself with it with all the dispositions that may most certainly obtain its salutary effects; and that being more closely united with thee from day to day, I may attain, like the saints, to the consummation of that union in the kingdom of heaven.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 347.)

FORTIETH MEDITATION.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST FREQUENT COMMUNION.

"And they began all at once to make excuse."—

St. Luke, xiv. 18.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS CHRIST and his Church urge us to participate frequently of the divine banquet: but a multitude of Christians do not respond to the invitation. In some, there are apathy, indifference, tepidity; in others, there exist fear without love, false respect, and scruples. Still, there are but few who frankly avow the motives of their conduct; the greater number dissemble or impose on themselves, resting on reasons which, when examined dispassionately and according to the principles of faith, are only idle pretexts.

Some say: I keep away, because I am not worthy to communicate frequently, not being sufficiently advanced in sanctity. But in answer, we ask: Are you not equally unworthy of a monthly, of a yearly communion? If your reason is a truly good one, you should never communicate. "If a person is unworthy to communicate every day," says St. Ambrose, "will he be worthy at the end of a year?"

You say you are unworthy to communicate? But this is true of all men: should no one, then, approach to the holy table? You are unworthy to communicate? But the Church is not ignorant of that, since it makes us repeat, before giving us the body of Jesus Christ, the words of the Centurion: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof!"* And yet, it is the Church that invites us to frequent communion.

The only unworthiness that can prevent us from receiving the divine sacrament, is the state of mortal sin: now, that cannot be in question here, since it is not of that you speak. As to venial sins, they are not a reason for receiving less frequently, for the Holy Eucharist, as the sacred Council of Trent teaches, "is an antidote against our daily faults, and preserves us from mortal sin."†

It is too often forgotten, that communion is not a recompense for sanctity acquired, but a means of becoming holier; and that should not be looked upon as a condition, which is only the fruit of the sacrament. What! do you require a man to be strong before taking the food that would strengthen him? Do you require a patient to be cured, before giving him the remedy that his state requires? The sanctity which holy communion requires as necessary is simply the state of grace, with the sincere wish to avoid sin and serve God faithfully: now, what Christian, animated with faith and piety, and, with still more reason, what Religious, is not in those dispositions?

* St. Matt., viii. 8.

† Sess. xiii. ch. ii.

There are some people who say: I abstain from communicating frequently, because I do not derive sufficient fruit from my communions. But the masters of a spiritual life will answer them: Are you sure that you derive little advantage from your communions? On what grounds do you judge this? "That sacrament," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "often works within us without our knowledge."

Your conscience tells you that you do not commit mortal sin: now, by that very fact, it is evident that your communions are profitable to you, for it is by them you avoid that great evil. Were there no other sign than this, let it be sufficient to prevent you from omitting any of your communions prescribed by rule. But that is not all; for the body of Jesus Christ, when the soul is exempt from mortal sin, works of itself salutary effects proportioned to our dispositions of purity, piety, and charity.

There are some who give as a reason for abstaining from frequent communion, that they have little fervor; that they are assaulted moreover by violent temptations, and that they do not dare in that state to receive the Holy of holies. But we say to such: Have you, besides exemption from mortal sin, a wish to do what you know to be agreeable to God? "The soul," says Gerson, "that abstains from communicating frequently because it is not sufficiently fervent, acts like him who, being cold, would refuse on that account to draw near to the fire."

Your temptations are a motive for communicating,

and not for abstaining from it. Is it not when danger is most pressing that we should have recourse to the most powerful means of defence ? What ! when the enemy makes his most furious assault upon you, and you have the greatest need of strength, you think of depriving yourself of the food of the strong ! Would not that be an inconceivable folly ?

Go, then, to Jesus who calls you. What do you fear, since you do not wish to offend him ? Does he not know of what clay we are formed, and how great is the tyranny which the devil and concupiscence, the daughter of the first sin, exercise over us ? He takes compassion on us ; and the temptations however horrible, however humiliating they may be, do not injure the intimacy of our relations with him. To be tempted and to resist is, instead of an obstacle, an admirable disposition for approaching with fruit to the Eucharistic table. Moreover, it often happens that, in these decisive and persistent struggles, frequent communion is the only means of salvation.

Some say, moreover : I fear to familiarize myself with an action so holy, and, by doing it frequently, to do it by routine. To this we answer in the words of St. Francis of Sales : " That only is done well which is done often, and the best workmen are those who practise most ; " or by this maxim of our Venerable Father : " There is no better preparation for communion than a previous one, unless we resist the grace of the sacrament." Thus, what you believe an obstacle is, on the contrary, a means.

Ah ! let us not confound habit with routine. Frequent communion gives the habit of communion, and by no means conducts of itself to routine. "Do not allow yourselves," says St. Liguori, "to be deceived by the thought that you will have more devotion when you communicate less frequently. He who eats seldom, it is true, has a greater appetite for food ; but he is far from being as strong as he who takes his meals regularly. If you communicate seldom, you will, perhaps, have a little more sensible devotion ; but your communion will be less profitable to you."

APPLICATION.

Let us not listen to the vain excuses of tepidity, nor to those of that slavish fear which rules some souls, who so frequently forget that the New Law is a law of love. Let us listen to Jesus our beloved Shepherd, inviting us, urging us to go to him, to nourish ourselves with his sacred flesh. Let us procure for his divine heart the consolation it requires. He is anxious to do us good, to pour out upon us the superabundance of his graces and merits. Nothing so pleases him as the frequent reception of this holy sacrament, as nothing so afflicts him as remaining away from his holy table.

Children of the Church and Religious ! let us act according to the spirit of the Church, and according to the letter and spirit of our rules. Let us communicate as often as we are permitted ; let us hunger for the heavenly food, and seize with happiness the opportunities that arise to add communions of devotion to our regular communions.

Let us hasten to the holy table, according as we are tried and assaulted by temptations, when we are more inclined to forget ourselves in the duties of our employment ; for it is then, more than at all other times, that we have most need of it.

Let us distrust scruples that put an obstacle to grace. Let us obey blindly those whose duty it is to direct us. When our conscience does not reproach us with any grievous sin, let us approach Jesus Christ without fear, remembering that he said : “ Bring in hither the poor and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame . . . that my house may be filled.” * “ They who are in health need not the physician ; but they that are sick.” †

PRAYER.

O divine Savior, who by a miracle of love wishest that I should receive thee frequently into my heart, I bless thy infinite charity, and respond gladly to thy sweet invitation ! Yes, I shall go to thee frequently, very frequently, so as to obey thee, and to draw from thee the strength and courage I stand in need of to fulfil faithfully all my obligations, and to attain to eternal union with thee in heaven. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 347.)

* St. Luke, xiv. 21, 23.

† *Ibid.*, v. 31.

FORTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

UNION WITH JESUS CHRIST.

"He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him."—St. John, vi. 57.

CONSIDERATION

How admirable is the union of man with Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist!

It is a true, substantial, and personal union. The divine Master teaches us this truth by his own mouth: "I am," says he, "the bread of life," . . . "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him."* The Church repeats the same thing in her office: "O sacred banquet in which Jesus Christ himself is received! . . . In the crib, he became our brother; at the paschal supper our food."†

"Jesus Christ unites with us," says St. Hilary, "not only by a union of the will and charity, but by a natural, strict, and perfect union."

"Let us unite," says St. Chrysostom, "the flesh of Jesus Christ to our own, so as to become one body with him, not only by the affection of our hearts, but in the reality itself; for such is the union formed between us

* St. John, vi. 57.

† Office of the Blessed Sacrament.

by means of the food which he gives us in testimony of his love. It is on that account he unites himself to us in substance, making us partakers of his own body, to be one only with him, as a body united with its head."

Divine Eucharist! who could worthily praise thee? Thou art Jesus Christ consummating his union with us. Through thee, poor miserable man receives his Lord and his God, unites himself to him by the closest, the most intimate union, which reaches, if we may so express it, even to identification.

When we partake of the adorable sacrament, we become, according to the language of the apostle, the body of Jesus Christ, and the members of his members.* "We unite," says St. John Damascene, "to the body of Jesus Christ and to his soul, and become the body of Jesus Christ." "As wax when poured out and added to wax," says St. Cyril of Alexandria, "becomes one wax; in such sort he who receives the body and blood of Jesus Christ, becomes so united to him, that Jesus Christ is in him and he is in Jesus Christ."

"By communion," say the holy fathers, "we become the members of Jesus Christ, bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh."† "That divine Savior blends with us, becomes incorporate, and if we may say so, becomes incarnate in us."‡ He unites himself to us under the form of food, and, consequently, as intimately as the food we take and which is changed into our flesh and blood; but with this difference that the divine food is not changed into us, on the contrary it changes us into it-

* 1 Cor., xii. 27. † St. Irenaeus. ‡ St. Cyril of Jerusalem.

self, like the graft which communicates its vigor and perfection of nature to the primitive trunk. "When two things," says Albertus Magnus, "unite, so that one is transformed into the other, the stronger and more excellent changes the weaker into itself: thus the Eucharistic food, being of a divine omnipotent energy, changes into itself those who receive it."

Oh! what glory for man to be admitted to such a union with God! O prodigy of unutterable love! Infinite greatness lowers itself to mere nothingness to make it partake of itself. The Lord, in his goodness and munificence, draws the poor man from the bosom of poverty to place him among the princes of his people.* He lifts us up even to himself, he folds us in his arms, he presses us to his heart, he makes us live by his life, and leaves in our minds, hearts, and bodies, the imprint of his divinity. "The Son of God," says St. Cyril of Alexandria, "unites with us corporally as man, and spiritually as God, and communicates to us the source of a new life, and a kind of participation in the divine nature."

How profitable that union is! With what beauty does Jesus Christ clothe the soul that receives him with piety! How he inspires it with the desire and love for virtue, and gives it strength and courage to practise it!

His flesh purifies our flesh, and weakens the fire of concupiscence which is always in us. His mind communicates to our mind the purest illuminations of truth,

* Ps., cxii. 7, 8.

his heart pours into our heart the treasures of his love.

"O Jesus, whom I possess within me," said the virtuous Marie Eustelle, "every throb of thy heart reacts on mine, and that echo is an act of adoration and love."*

Yes, when we have received him, Jesus acts in us in all our faculties. He is at work there both as God and man, and takes possession of our mind and heart to make us advance in the knowledge and love of him who is truth in its essence—beauty and goodness itself.

Let us recall to mind what the saints have done through Jesus residing within them, and let us understand how efficacious is the union with him through his holy sacrament.

That union is also the source of the sweetest consolations and the purest joys. What consolation, what joys can be imagined, which are not surpassed by those we find here !

When the hand of God is laid upon our breast, or rather when God himself is in us, how should our heart thrill with joy ? "At the presence of the Lord the earth was moved,"† cries out the prophet: what then passes in the soul contemplating and possessing that sovereign Lord ?

Yes, sometimes it experiences an interior satisfaction, compared to which all the joys of the world are no more than the light of a lamp in presence of the sun. Let us judge of it by these words of the

* Letter 19.

† Ps., cxiii. 7.

holy virgin of Saintonge, who was so devoted to the blessed sacrament: "Jesus, this is the exclamation of love, this is the exclamation of my soul, which Jesus is pleased to consume more and more. . . . Oh! how I am submerged in that mysterious ocean! What sweet refreshment, and, at the same time, what a consuming flame! . . . It seems to me that I feel the heart of Jesus beat against mine, and every movement of his heart repeats his love to me. Ah! why are not all the throbs of mine so many acts of love and gratitude?"

Doubtless, the generality of faithful souls do not experience as sensible consolations; but there is always a happiness for them in being united to Jesus Christ, to speak to him heart to heart, to receive the impressions of his divine presence.

"In communion," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "there is celebrated a continual banquet, and the Lamb himself is its delicious food. The soul there tastes interior peace, a tranquil happiness, a joy full of serenity. . . . There we find the gate of heaven."

APPLICATION.

Let us love and bless Jesus who has so loved us as to become our food, to change us into himself, and to communicate to us the treasures of his divinity. Has he not every right over our hearts? Let us consecrate them to him without reserve and forever.

Let us ardently desire his coming; let us aspire, with all the ardor of our soul, to the happiness of possessing him. Let us prepare to receive him. Let us neglect

nothing in our power, so that his presence may work in our soul its salutary effects. Let us detach our affections from creatures and from ourselves, and let us go to him with the sincere wish to coöperate with his graces, and live in him and for him.

At the remembrance of the communions we have made, let us respect our body sanctified by the presence of Jesus Christ. Let us watch and pray, so as to preserve the fruits of our participation in the divine banquet. Let us keep ourselves united in heart and mind to God who gives himself to us, and we shall find the grace of attaining to an eternal union with him in the abode of the blessed.

PRAYER.

“O Lord! who will give me to find thee alone, to open my heart to thee, and to enjoy thee as my soul desires, so that thou mayst speak to me in solitude, and I may speak also heart to heart with thee, as a friend is wont to speak and banquet with his friend !

“That which I ask of thee, that which I desire is, to be entirely united to thee, to detach my heart from all creatures, and to learn more and more, by holy communion, to relish heavenly and eternal things. Ah ! Lord my God, when shall I be perfectly united to thee, and, as it were, entirely absorbed in thee, without ever more thinking of myself—thou in me, and I thee ? Grant me the grace to remain for ever in that union with thee.”*

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 348.)

* Imit., book iv., ch. xiii. 1.

FORTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

HOLY COMMUNION THE LIFE OF THE SOUL.

“Seek ye God, and your soul shall live.”—Ps., lxviii. 33.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us seek Jesus Christ; let us go to that sweet Savior; let us unite ourselves to him with the requisite dispositions, and our soul shall live for time and eternity.

The faithful of Africa, at the time of St. Augustine, called the Holy Eucharist, “the life.” “Let us go to the life,” said they,—to signify, “Let us approach the holy communion.” Oh! how admirably that name suits the adorable sacrament of the altar, in which Jesus Christ fulfils these words: “I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly.”*

The heavenly food presented to us, has more virtue than the fruit of the earthly paradise, which, however, was to keep man in perpetual youth. Therefore, St. Francis of Sales writes: “If men dwelling in the earthly paradise, could not die bodily through virtue of the tree of life which God had placed there, with still more reason we can not die spiritually through virtue of this

* St. John, x. 10.

sacrament of life. The Christians who shall be lost, will be unable to answer when the Sovereign Judge will make them see the wrong they did in dying spiritually, since it was easy for them to preserve life and health by his divine body, which he had left to them with that intention.—Wretches, he will say to them, why did you die, having with you the life-giving fruit."

That fruit is the sacred body of our Savior. He himself teaches us this, saying : "I am the bread of life.... This is the bread which cometh down from heaven ; that if any one eat of it, he may not die. . . The bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you."*

While he was visibly upon earth, Jesus Christ did not cease to give life to, and heal, both souls and bodies. Now, that is what he does in the Holy Eucharist. He is there the life of those who receive him with good dispositions.

"Other sacraments work only by the power he gives them, but here he works directly by himself, it is he who acts ; and as fire warms much more effectually when applied immediately to its object, than when it communicates its heat through another body, so Jesus Christ, who is the source of all heavenly gifts, and the fountain of all graces, must diffuse them more abundantly through our hearts when he is united to us himself by his own substance, than when he distributes them through a sacrament distinct from himself."† When a

* St. John, vi. 48, 50, 52, 54.

† Bourdaloue.

monarch gives alms with his own hands, it is more magnificent and costly than when he distributes it through his ministers: when we communicate, it is the King of kings who comes to us, and who comes to bestow on us gifts worthy of his munificence.

In virtue of the union we contract with the Incarnate Word, when we receive him in communion, we are incorporated with him, we become his members, and, consequently, we live by his life.

“The Son of God,” says St. Thomas, “receives the life of his Father because he is one with the Father: so he who is united to Jesus Christ by communion, receives the life of Jesus Christ.”

“The manna with which the Jews were fed in the desert,” says St. Cyril of Alexandria, “did not bring them eternal life, but only a momentary refreshment; it was not the true bread, the true bread which cometh down from heaven: but the body of Jesus Christ nourishes us to eternal life, as our divine Savior himself has declared. The Jews drank of the water which flowed from the rock. What advantage did they derive from it since they are dead? That water was not the true drink; the true drink is the blood of Jesus Christ, by virtue of which the empire of death is uprooted from its foundations, for it is the blood of him who, united to substantial life, has become our life.”

“O most amiable Savior!” says St. Francis of Sales, “what other food can give eternal life, but thy body? A living bread was necessary to give life, a bread which hath come down from heaven to give heavenly life, a

bread that was thou thyself, to give immortal and eternal life! The manna, although a true figure of thy body, has not that power.

“O holy and glorious life! It is in the communion of the body and blood of my divine Savior, that I find the pledges of my happy eternity.

“Whosoever makes use of this august sacrament with devotion, so strengthens the life and health of his soul, that it is almost impossible he should be poisoned by any sort of evil inclinations. It is impossible to be fed with this bread of life and live with the inclinations that bring death. . . . Our hearts, although frail and miserable, will be preserved from the corruption of sin, being vivified by the uncorruptible flesh and blood of the Son of God.”

Thus holy communion sustains, strengthens, and makes the faithful soul grow in virtue, cherishes and develops in her the life of grace, a supernatural vigor. Jesus, in the blessed sacrament, acts as a creator, conservator, and life-giver; by the virtue of his sacred flesh, he communicates to us in abundance the love of virtue, and courage to sustain it, and enables us to advance with rapid strides towards perfection.

The divine food given to us at the holy table, not only preserves the life of the soul, as material bread does that of the body, but considerably increases it; and by it our spiritual life becomes more and more flourishing.

“That which bread and wine procure for the body,” says the sacred Council of Trent, “the Holy Eucharist procures, in an infinitely more perfect way, for the good

and salvation of the soul. Here it is not the sacrament that is changed into our substance: it is we ourselves who are, in some sort, changed into its nature. Grace and truth having been brought by Jesus Christ, they must necessarily be diffused through the soul of him who communicates with a pure and innocent heart. Whoever partakes of the Holy Eucharist with faith and piety, while receiving in him the Son of God, finds himself united to him as a living member. Jesus Christ gives us his body and blood to sanctify us and give us eternal life."

APPLICATION.

The Holy Eucharist is truly the living and life-giving bread, without which, says St. Francis of Assisium, souls languish and die: let us then appreciate it above all things. Let us desire, with all the ardor of our souls, to participate in that sacrament, "in which," says the author of the *Imitation*, "the grace of the Holy Ghost is given, the soul recovers the strength it had lost, and is restored to its first beauty of which sin had robbed it."*

Let us go to holy communion as often as we are allowed by obedience; let us prove in all circumstances, that nothing so satisfies our heart as to sit down at the divine banquet, where love presents us the bread which came down from heaven, and which gives life to the world, and where we can drink at the fountain of living water, and quench the thirst of our soul.

* Book iv., ch. i. 11.

Let us add, especially in times of trial and weakness, communions of devotion to our regular communions; but let us each time excite in ourselves a true fervor, so that the divine Eucharist may produce in us all its fruits of sanctification.

Let us labor to correct our failings, to become from day to day more regular, more pious, and more charitable. Then our communions will be eminently profitable to us; and strengthened by the sacred flesh of him who has said, "I am the life,"* we shall truly live by him in time, and in him in eternity.

PRAYER.

O divine Jesus, what food thou offerest to me! O mystery filling the angels of heaven with astonishment! Man eats life at the table of the Eternal! When I have communicated, I can say with the apostle: "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me."† Yes, live in me, O my Savior! and grant that, by thy grace, I may live in thee and for thee in a more perfect way, until the new life which I receive in the union with thy sacred body, may receive its consummation in heaven, and become eternal life.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 348.)

* St. John, xi. 25.

† Gal., ii. 20.

FORTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

HOLY COMMUNION, A MEANS TO AVOID EVIL AND DO GOOD.

"Turn away from evil and do good."—Ps. xxxiii. 15.

CONSIDERATION.

THE Lord speaking by the mouth of David, says to us: "Turn away from evil, and do good." He has given us, in the Holy Eucharist, the greatest means of fulfilling this precept: "For," says the author of the *Imitation*, "this sublime and most excellent sacrament is the salvation of soul and body, the remedy for all our spiritual maladies. It is by it that our vices are cured, our passions restrained, temptations vanquished or weakened, graces poured out in the greatest abundance. It is by it that virtue receives an increase, that faith is confirmed, that hope is animated, and charity inflamed and extended."*

The greatest mission of Jesus Christ in his mortal life was to destroy sin, and lead men to perfection: this he continues in his Eucharistic life.

In fact, he requires, as the first condition for participating in his sacrament, exemption from mortal sin, telling us by St. Paul, to prove ourselves before

* Book iv. ch. iv. 2.

approaching his holy table, and teaching us himself in the Gospel, that we must be clothed with the nuptial garment to enter into the supper room. By that alone, how many sins are avoided! How many souls are checked at the verge of the precipice of evil, by saying to themselves: How could I offend the God of love and holiness who, a short while ago, gave himself to me! How many, having been reconciled to God by the sacrament of penance, have afterwards been preserved in grace by the efficacy of the bread of angels!

The Holy Eucharist, says St. Thomas, as food, preserves us from mortal sin; and as a remedy and outward armor, it defends us against the devil whose attacks it repels. It strengthens us, it heals us, it protects us. "Jesus Christ has desired," says the sacred Council of Trent, "that this sacrament should be received as an antidote which shall deliver us from our daily faults, and preserve us from mortal sin."*

Holy Communion prevents sin in its beginning. It defends us against the snares and artifices of hell, for, say the fathers,† the body and blood of Jesus Christ banish devils and keep them from us. It diminishes the fire and heat of concupiscence. It is that mysterious dew of which the Holy Ghost speaks, when he says: "Shall not the dew assuage the heat?"‡ "The power of refreshing," says Albertus Magnus, "is not more natural to water, than that of moderating the heat of concupiscence is to the sacrament of the altar."

* Sess. xiii, ch. ii. † St. Paulinus and St. Chrysostom.

‡ Eccl., xviii. 16.

. There are burning seasons for the soul when everything is threatened with destruction. "What will calm," says St. Bernard, "those impetuous movements of an ill-regulated life? What will check the violence of that interior fire?—the sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus Christ." "Those who drink the 'vine springing forth virgins,' have no more thirst for the gross pleasures of earth: they experience only the holy jubilations of chaste souls."^{*}

The flesh of Jesus Christ, unless by an entirely special gift, does not wholly extinguish the fire of concupiscence: but it weakens it, and counteracts it, by the fire of divine love. It is not the design of God that it should deliver us from this body of death that exercises so cruel a tyranny over us; yet it gives us the power to master it, and subject it to the spirit.

Holy communion, which prevents sin by the strength it communicates to us, prevents it also by the light which it infuses into our souls, and by the consolation it brings us.

Jesus Christ coming to us, penetrates our soul and unites it to his own. He in some sense destroys our will, to substitute his own holy will. He causes the teachings of his wisdom to be imprinted in our hearts, and repeats to us these salutary maxims:—My Son, "Love not the world, nor those things which are in the world."[†] . . . "Watch and pray, for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."[‡]

* Monseigneur Landriot. † 1 St. John, ii. 15.

‡ St. Matt., xxvi. 41.

"The divine food we receive at the altar," says St. Vincent Ferrer, "cures our understanding of its errors, our will of its irregular inclinations, our memory of its forgetfulness of the benefits of God and of eternity." Holy communion makes us despise the glory and enchantment of the world, and by it these words of the wise man are fulfilled: "A soul that is full shall tread upon the honeycomb."*

We experience, at least from time to time, the pure and sweet joys of the sacred banquet: by that means, we better understand how contemptible are worldly joys whose attractions we resist, saying to ourselves:—How can he who has drunk of the cup of the Lord, raise to his lips the cup of iniquity? How can he who has heard the divine guest say to him in the depth of his soul, "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet,"† consent to any allurement to sin? Should he not say, I abhor all guilty pleasures, and aspire only to the pure joys of virtue?

Holy communion makes us vigilant over ourselves; for, after having received it, we feel that we carry in our hands a great spiritual treasure, and that we ought to walk with the greatest precaution, so as not to lose it.

Holy Communion excites us to contrition for our faults, even the least. Jesus Christ makes us hear in the depth of our heart his tender reproaches of love: then we shed tears of repentance, we ask his pardon, and he gives us the kiss of peace. His presence has the effect of making our conscience delicate—careful to

* Prov., xxvii. 7.

† Ps., xxxiii. 9.

do nothing that could grieve him. Yes, the soul that feeds on the Holy Eucharist does not wish to offend God, nor to expose itself to offend him. Ah ! the very name of sin disquiets, troubles, and saddens it. It does not willingly tolerate any defect, knowing that one single ill-arranged hair offends the eyes of her heavenly spouse.

Jesus Christ knows our weaknesses, and gives us, when he gives us himself, the grace of those virtues opposed to them ; he does not dwell idly in our heart, but the purport of his action is our sanctification. He enables us to embrace with courage, and from the purest motives, the virtues of chastity, humility, patience, poverty, and zeal. While feeding ourselves with the new bread of Elias, we walk without stopping towards the summit of the mountain of God ; that is to say, to perfection. While leaning on the breast of Jesus, like the beloved disciple, we, too, receive the influence of his adorable heart, the virtue of which transforms ours into a furnace of divine love.

APPLICATION.

Let us bless the divine goodness which, by the Holy Eucharist, gives us a remedy for our spiritual miseries, and causes grace to abound in the place of sin.

Let us frequently partake at the holy table. Every thing leads us to do so. We have before us a laborious career encompassed with difficulties ; let us go, then, to him who will enable us to traverse it to the end. We wish to avoid sin : let us, then, unite with him who can give us that strength and courage. We wish to attain

to perfection ; let us take the food which will double our strength, and prevent weakness and loss of courage.

Let us remember that it is written : “ Come ye to him and be enlightened.”* “ Be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of his might . . . that you may be able to stand against the snares of the devil.”†

Let us not be too easy in believing that our communions are of little profit to us. Let us not forget that sanctity is the work of a whole life, and not of a moment or a day.

Let us be zealous in training our pupils to be devout to the blessed sacrament, to make them esteem, desire, and embrace the practice of frequent communion ; for that is the best means to preserve them from evil, and to secure their keeping themselves in the path of virtue.

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! who art the way, the truth, and the life,‡ be my light and my salvation. Take pity on my soul, assaulted, alas ! by so many and such violent temptations. Oh, grant that, by the grace of thy sacrament, I may triumph over my passions and all the efforts of the world and the devil ; that I may establish myself in thy holy love, and may persevere therein until the day when thou shalt call me to thyself in the abode of eternal life !

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 349.)

* Ps., xxxiii. 6.

† Eph., vi. 10, 11.

‡ St. John, xiv. 6.

FORTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

HOLY COMMUNION IS OUR DEFENCE.

“Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me.”—Ps., xxii. 5.

CONSIDERATION.

THIS life is a time of warfare. The enemies of our salvation are numerous, powerful, and terrible. The divine Eucharist does not shelter us from their attacks, but it does more; it gives us the strength to triumph over them, and make them occasions for merit in heaven.

Let us expect then the storms of temptation, but let us have confidence; we shall resist them by the strength of God with us. “He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High,” says the royal prophet, . . . “shall say to the Lord: thou art my protector and my refuge: My God, in him will I trust. . . . His truth shall compass thee with a shield; thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night, of the arrow that flieth in the day, of the business that walketh about in the dark, of invasion, or of the noonday devil.”*

Now, by communion, we dwell with the Most High,

* Ps., xc. 1-6.

we repose under the shadow of the Almighty; and, therefore, what can we fear? Is it not written: "If God be for us, who is against us?"*

We have as an enemy the world, which seduces so many souls by its false maxims and vain pomps; but holy communion is for a rampart against it. Jesus Christ in coming to us gives us, in fact, with the understanding and love of the maxims of the Gospel which are the opposite to those of the world, the grace firmly to reject these latter, and to make our conduct conformable to his teachings. He detaches our heart from creatures. He says to us: "Love not the world:"† Avoid the world; "the prince of this world is already judged."‡

The Christian who communicates often and with piety, is daily more detached in his heart from the things of the world, has more indifference or contempt for what worldlings esteem and seek after; more fidelity in turning his eyes from what might be a snare to his virtue, more attention and constancy in keeping his thoughts and affections fixed on the things of heaven. The world hates him, perhaps persecutes him, but God to whom he is united says to him: "Have confidence, I have overcome the world :"§—and, reassured by these words, he no longer fears.

The devil and his angels are leagued with the world for our ruin. The prince of darkness comes among the children of God to trouble them, with his accustomed

* Rom., viii. 31. † 1 St. John, ii. 15. ‡ St. John, xvi. 11.

§ St. John, xvi. 33.

malice. Let us not fear him, for the Holy Eucharist is an all-powerful armor to resist and repel him. Jesus in his Eucharistic life, as in his mortal life, commands the spirits of hell who obey him, and confess while they tremble, that he is the Son of God.

The sign of the cross puts them to flight: how much more so the body and blood of Jesus Christ from whom the cross received its virtue. “The devil is enraged,” says St. Paulinus, “when he sees that we eat the Eucharistic bread with avidity and profit to ourselves.” “That blood which thou hast shed, O Satan,” says St. Chrysostom, “is my salvation, and when I have drunk it, I do not fear thy poison.” “The more you will partake of the Holy Eucharist,” says St. Ignatius, the martyr, “the more you will weaken the strength of the devil your enemy. The fiery darts that he launches will return upon himself.”

Let us then bless divine Providence for the aid he offers us, and say with sentiments of gratitude and love: “Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me.”

With the world and the devil, the triple concupiscence conspires against us—that enemy which is in our mind, our heart, and our body, which is there always and which strongly inclines us to evil. But, by the holy communion, we shall surely triumph over it.

Jesus Christ when coming to us, combats the pride of life, and leads us to humility, saying: “Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.”* “Put yourself in

* St. Matt., xi. 29.

the lowest place. He who exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he who humbleth himself shall be exalted.”* See, I am the servant of all.†—Do you not wish to imitate your Lord and Master?

Jesus Christ combats in us the concupiscence of the eyes: he leads us to esteem and love only supernatural riches. Under the influence of his grace, the soul soon desires to give all, and give itself for the God who has deigned to visit it and enrich it with his favors.

Holy communion is most especially our resource against the concupiscence of the flesh, which is the cause of our greatest combat. The bread of angels gives us the strength of the angelic virtue. The Holy Eucharist is the fountain of living water where the wayfarer refreshes himself, and calms the inward fire which consumes him. It is, according to the expression of Zacharias, “The corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins.”‡

But let us, on this last effect of the Holy Eucharist, as on the others, hear the teachings of the saints and masters of a spiritual life:—

“When Jesus Christ is in us,” says St. Cyril of Alexandria, “he appeases the movements of concupiscence in our members, strengthens piety, dispels anxieties of mind, and raises us after we have fallen.”

“Let us arm with that heavenly food,” says St. Cyprian, “those whom we wish to protect against the assaults of the devil.” “Nothing,” says St. Jerome, “so strengthens the soul, as this bread of life.”

* St. Luke, xiv. 10, 11. † *Ibid.*, xxii. 27. ‡ Zach., ix. 17.

"There is no armor," says St. Gregory the Great, "more powerful against the enemies of our salvation than to receive often the body of Jesus Christ, whose presence alone banishes devils, and remedies the most inveterate maladies. There is no more sure and more ready means to check the passions, to entirely uproot evil habits, to strengthen the soul against temptations, to encourage it and lead it to enter on the most difficult undertakings, to make it immovable in the practice of virtue, and to inflame it with the love of God."

"We have in us," says St. Bernard, "an old ulcer for which communion is the sovereign remedy. This sacrament is powerful and efficacious for blotting out sins, defeating our enemies, and leading us to heaven, our true country."

APPLICATION.

Let us bless our divine Savior for having, through his sacrament, become our aid, the protector of our souls, and the repairer of human frailty; and let us give him thanks for all our triumphs over the enemies of our salvation. Let us have recourse to him, saying with the Apostle: "I can do all things in him that strengthens me."*

Let us communicate frequently, very frequently, especially in times of trial and temptations: "For," says St. Francis of Assisium, "the more weary a traveller is the more reason he has to take food, lest he sink from weakness." Let us fear above all our temptations, those that would keep us away from the holy table:

* Phil., iv. 13.

the devil soon overcomes the souls that are deprived of the bread of the strong, and it is not long before they faint on the way.

But let us communicate with all the piety, all the fervor we are capable of, so that this sacrament may work in us all its salutary effects, and may make us invulnerable to the assaults of our enemies.

Let us inspire our pupils with the most lively affection for the Holy Eucharist. Let us make them esteem and love holy communion, which will be their defence and their safety.

PRAYER.

By that august mystery of thy body and blood which daily nourishes us, O Lord! quenches our thirst, sanctifies us in the Church, and makes us partakers of thy divinity, I beseech thee to give me the necessary virtues for approaching to thy holy table with a pure conscience, that thus this divine sacrament may become my salvation and my life.

“O saving Victim who openest for us the gate of heaven! we are pressed on all sides by the attacks of our enemy the devil; give us the strength to resist him, and bring us succor in the midst of the numberless dangers to which we are exposed!”*

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 349.)

* From the *O Salutaris*.

FORTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

THE HOLY COMMUNION, THE SOURCE OF ALL KINDS OF BLESSINGS.

“Come ye to him and be enlightened.”—Ps., xxxiii. 6.

CONSIDERATION.

“NEVER,” says Louis de Blois, “shall language be able to express, shall the mind be able to conceive, the immense blessings that the soul draws from a devout participation of the Holy Eucharist.”

“That divine food,” says St. Chrysostom, “is the strength of our soul, the vigor of our mind, the bond and foundation of our hope, our salvation, our light, and our life. It inspires both inclination and ardor for the practice of virtue; it gives great joy, and makes the path of perfection sweet and easy.”

Jesus, in the blessed sacrament, is the light of the soul that receives him. Therefore it is written: “Come ye to him and be enlightened;” and the Church says to him: “O Jesus, sweetness of hearts, thou are the source of all happiness! When thou visitest our hearts truth shines upon them, the vanity of the world appears more despicable, and charity burns within us.”*

* Office of the holy Name of Jesus.

Yes, at the breaking of bread our eyes are opened, as happened to the disciples going to Emmaus, and we recognize our Savior. We hear him speaking within us, and giving us to understand heavenly things. "Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is the science of the saints. The soul uniting herself to him proves by a most pleasing experience the truth of these words, 'I will manifest myself to him.'* She rises from light to light, from splendor to splendor, till she comes into the noonday brightness of the divinity. There every thing created is lost sight of, because Jesus, the eternal love, captivates her, inflames her, consumes her, and unites her to his heart by bonds stronger than death."†

Holy communion, the fire of the brightest light, is likewise that of the purest joys. Our soul is there delightfully warmed by the beneficent heat of the sun of justice. "O Lord!" says the author of the *Imitation*, "thou dost enlighten and gladden thy servants interiorly, by a certain new grace. Who is he that approaches humbly to the fountain of heavenly delights, who does not carry thence a few drops? Or who, standing by a great fire, receives no warmth from it? Now, thou art that fountain always full and overflowing, that fire always burning and never extinguished."‡

The bread given to us is that of which it is written, that it shall yield dainties to kings; § it is the manna of the new law containing all that can gratify the taste;

* St. John, xiv. 21.

† Marie Eustelle, Letter 120.

‡ Imit., book iv. ch. iv. 3.

§ Gen., xlix. 20.

it is the food on which the angels and saints banquet in the kingdom of heaven.

“O exquisite bread,” cries out St. Eusebius, “in which are found all the sweetesses of taste and smell, all delights, all remedies, all encouragements, all repose, and all good things desirable.”

The Christian who communicates, participates in the happiness of St. John the Apostle, who rested his head on the bosom of his adorable Master, and received the influence of his divine heart. Jesus dwelling in us, says to us : “Peace be with you.”* Therefore, St. John Damascene calls the altar the table of peace, and St. Gregory Nazianzem writes : “I have my divine banquet ; it is a resource against those who persecute me ; it is there that I nourish myself, that I taste a delicious repose ; it is there that I put all my suffering to rest.”

Holy communion is our strength against the devil, the world, and the flesh. Of ourselves we are only reeds ; but through Jesus, in the blessed sacrament, we become like the oak of the forest, or like immovable pillars : nothing is able to subdue or dishearten him who frequently and worthily communicates. Here is the bread of Elias by which we recover all our vigor, and can walk afterwards even to the mountain of God : here is the sacred food which has made the martyrs so intrepid, so courageous, so superior to themselves.

Holy communion is the source of true sanctity, the chief means of perfection, for Jesus Christ has said :

* St. John, xx. 19.

"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." *

What, in fact, is holiness and perfection but our union with God, our transformation into God, the love of God reigning in us? Now, what union of man with God is more real, more intimate, more efficacious than the Eucharistic union? What is there that so much transforms us into God, as to receive God himself? Where can the fire of divine love exist more than in the contact of our heart with the heart of Jesus?

Let us remember what the saints were under the impression of the grace of the Holy Eucharist; and let us understand what that sacrament works for the sanctification of those who receive it with fervor. How it increases faith, hope, charity, patience, humility, and sweetness in them!..... They appear like other Jesus Christs. They in some sort preserve his characteristic traits, as a vase preserves the sweetness of an exquisite perfume that it has contained. Therefore, St. Francis of Sales says: "There is no more powerful means to make souls like to God than the holy communion, provided it is frequented with suitable faith, purity, and devotion."

Our body itself feels the salutary action of this sacrament. "The divine food of the Eucharist," says St. Teresa, "is not only food for our soul, but even for our body. It is a remedy even for bodily evils. Jesus Christ, during his mortal life, healed the sick who touched his garments: why should we doubt that he will work miracles when he resides in us?"

* St. John, xv. 5.

“It is impossible,” says a pious and learned prelate, “that the light, the strength, the consolation which the holy Eucharist procures for the soul, should not react upon the body: from thence result the harmony of our faculties, calmness of blood, modesty of looks, and that beautiful exterior order, which is at the same time a proof of the beauty of the soul, and a safeguard for its production.”* “The grace received in this sacrament,” says the author of the *Imitation*, “is so great that often through the fulness of devotion that is bestowed, not only the mind, but the body also, finds a great increase of strength.”†

Let us add, that the good use of communion in purifying us from our faults, delivers us from many of the temporal evils we would have to suffer either in this life or the next. Therefore, how many souls in purgatory regret that they did not have recourse more frequently and more fervently to that means of effacing even the very least traces of sin!

It is then with reason that St. Ambrose exclaims, speaking of the holy Eucharist: “Approach and you shall be filled, your thirst will be quenched, you will be enlightened, delivered, freed from the cares of the world, the disquietness of life, the fear of death; approach, and you will find forgiveness of your faults, and true happiness.”

APPLICATION.

Let us carefully prepare for communion, so as to find therein the abundance of good things contained in it.

* Monseigneur Landriot.

† Book iv. ch. i. 11.

Let us partake with piety at the holy table ; and for that purpose let us unite in our interior dispositions with our good angel guardian adoring God who gives himself to us, and with Mary and Joseph pressing the divine Infant to their hearts burning with love.

Let us taste, but without attaching ourselves thereto, the sensible sweetness which that heavenly banquet sometimes presents. Let us give ourselves resolutely to Jesus Christ, and afterwards keep our engagements with fidelity. Let us on days of communion be more regular, more recollected, more charitable : let us show that the gift of God truly brings forth fruit within us.

Let us earnestly ask of those who have the direction of our conscience the favor of communicating frequently ; and to obtain it, let us do all they prescribe. Let us compassionate those souls who, depriving themselves of the divine Eucharist, suffer themselves to die of hunger, when they might so easily be fed with the bread of the strong which would prove their salvation.

PRAYER.

“ May this divine sacrament, O Lord, purify us more and more and give us new strength ; and by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and of all the saints, may it expiate all our iniquities, and preserve us from all adversity.”*

Grant, O Jesus, that receiving thee with fervor, I may draw thence all the fruits that thine infinite good-

* Liturgy.

ness has attached to this holy sacrament, so that, strengthened by that help, I may happily complete my pilgrimage, and may attain to the happiness thou hast promised in these words: “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life.”*

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 350.)

* St. John, vi. 55.

FORTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

HOLY COMMUNION, A PLEDGE OF A GLORIOUS RESURRECTION.

“With thee is the fountain of life.”—Ps., xxxv. 10.

CONSIDERATION.

“GOD made not death.”* It was sin and our separation from God that introduced it into the world.† Therefore we can triumph over it by a return to God, by our union with him who is the fountain of life.

The Son of God having come to reëstablish us in our first state, not only delivers our soul from sin but our body from death, and that miracle he accomplishes admirably by the Holy Eucharist.

It is not that we can preserve by this sacrament the life of misery that is in us. No! for the decree is passed: “It is appointed unto all men once to die.”‡ We are like an edifice whose foundations are in ruins and whose fall is inevitable; or like a tree containing within itself a gnawing worm which causes it to perish, and from which nothing can deliver it. But Jesus Christ coming to us, deposits in our bodies the germ of that life which is in him, and that germ preserves itself amidst the

* Wis., i. 13.

† Rom., v. 12.

‡ Heb., ix. 27.

infirmities of our earthly condition, and the decomposition of the tomb. One day it will develop itself, will absorb us in itself, and we shall live anew by the very life of Jesus Christ.

The flesh of that divine Savior mingled with ours, shall be still more efficacious than was the fruit of the tree of life ; it will reanimate the dust of the sepulchre, and will shine forever in our resuscitated body which will be to it like a garment.

Elias, and afterwards Eliseus, by lying upon the body of a dead child, restored it to life. Now, was not that a figure of what Jesus Christ does, when he humbles himself to unite himself with us ? If the bones of the second of those prophets had the power to raise one from the dead, could the flesh of him whom the prophets announced have a less effect ?

By communion, are we not, as it were, identified with Jesus Christ ; and, consequently, must he not in some sense fulfil in our regard these words spoken of himself : “Thou wilt not give thy holy one to see corruption ?”*

Jesus Christ himself teaches us this truth, saying to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life : †” and to the Jews of Capernaum : “I am the living bread which came down from heaven.”‡ “I will raise him up at the last day who comes to me.”§ “I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and they died. This is the bread descending down from heaven, that if any one eat of it he may not die. . . .

* Ps., xv. 10. † St. John, xi. 25. ‡ *Ibid.*, vi. 51. § *Ibid.*, 44.

If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever, and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”* “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”† “He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.”‡

Behold in what terms the divine master states that effect of the Holy Eucharist. How he insists on the same thought! Ah! it was because he knew how we cling to life, and he wishes to make us esteem above everything else, the sacred banquet wherein it is communicated to us.

The Church, with all its doctors, teaches, that the holy communion is the pledge, the germ, the commencement of our glorious resurrection. “The virtue of the true bread of heaven, of the divine Eucharist,” says the Catechism of the Council of Trent, “extends even to our bodies; it sanctifies them, and in some sort makes them divine, since by communion they make but one with Jesus Christ. It becomes for them the pledge of a glorious resurrection and a blessed immortality.”

“Jesus Christ wishes,” says the holy Council itself, “that this sacrament should be the pledge of our future glory, and our eternal happiness.”§

“Ah! how,” says St. Irenæus, “could our bodies that were nourished with the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, remain in the corruption of the tomb? Is not Jesus

* St. John, 48-52.

† *Ibid.*, 55.

‡ *Ibid.*, 59.

§ Sess. xiii., ch. 2.

Christ the resurrection and the life? In uniting himself to our bodies in the Holy Eucharist, that divine Saviour imprints on them a germ of life and glory: it is a fire hidden under the ashes which will one day consume the disorder caused by the corruption of sin. That germ of life and glory awaits only the signal of the last trumpet to transform, in the twinkling of an eye, the bodies of the just to the resemblance of the glorious body of Jesus Christ, their head."

"Jesus Christ," says St. Cyril of Alexandria, "gives his body for the life of all, and it is by that body we receive life. It is not possible that, being by his flesh in the body that receives him, it should not conquer corruption and be master of death. Because Jesus Christ is in us by his own flesh, it is certain that we shall rise again, for it is impossible that life should not animate him in whom it resides. And in the same way as a spark, cast amongst straw, sets it on fire in a few moments, so the Word of God, clinging like a spark to our nature, penetrates it with his heat, brings it back to life, and totally destroys death."

St. Gregory, of Nyssa, says: "We have by sin introduced into us a principle of disorganization; it is necessary that we should neutralize its effects by a nourishment which would produce the contrary, and which should expel from our body the mortal poison that threatens its existence. Now, what can that precious antidote be, but the sacred body we have seen triumph over death, and become thereby a sure pledge of our own life?"

"O admirable Lord," cries St. Francis of Sales, "if a little leaven makes a mass of paste ferment, if a spark of fire is sufficient to burn down a house, if a grain sown in the earth fertilizes it and reproduces so many others, how much reason have I to hope that your sacred body communicating itself to mine, will raise it up from its corruption at the time decreed, enlighten it with a glorious beauty, and be the germ of its immortality!"

Yes! everything reminds us that the divine Eucharist deposits in us the germ of a glorious resurrection, and we can exclaim with a learned and holy bishop: "O body of man, O sacred members, you carry in you the perfume of the divinity, and the seed of immortal life! The Incarnate Word has united with you, to place you in communication with his divinity, and to prepare your deification in heaven."*

APPLICATION.

At the remembrance of the salutary effects of the holy Eucharist, let us excite in ourselves the most ardent desire to receive it. Let us truly hunger for that bread of life whose impression will remain in our body of death, and manifest itself at the last day.

Let us communicate with a lively fervor, an affectionate piety, and a most sacred will to profit by the grace of the sacrament to live truly by the life of Jesus Christ. Let us respect our body, which he makes his sanctuary, and which, if we are of the number of the elect, will be, on the day of resurrection, like a garment of his glorious flesh. Let us think of the honor

* Monseigneur Landriot.

he does it, and let us honor it ourselves, by making it serve only virtue.

Let us unite ourselves intimately in body, mind, and heart, to Jesus in the blessed sacrament, and let us remain full of hope. Let us not fear death, for Jesus Christ has conquered it, and we could say to it: "Though I should walk in thy shadow I will fear no evil, for God is my support."* "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"† Through God who gives himself to me, I shall escape thy power, and break thy nets.

Let us fear only sin which is the death of the soul, and the beginning of the death of the body. Let us avoid it even at the cost of the greatest sacrifices. Let us keep ourselves free from every fault, so that the body of Jesus Christ producing all its effects in us, may be really our resurrection and our life on the great day when those who are his will rise again to eternal life.

PRAYER.

O divine Savior! O Restorer of fallen humanity! O my life and my love! behold how I approach thee on the invitation thou deignest to give me! I am about to unite my body sentenced to death, to thy sacred body. O come to deposit therein the germ of eternal life! and grant by thy grace that that germ may be safe under the guardianship of thy angels, and that on the day when all things shall be fulfilled, it may develop and make me live by thy glorious life. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 350.)

* Ps., xxii. 4.

† 1 Cor., xv. 55.

FORTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

HOLY COMMUNION AND HEAVEN.

"He that eateth my flesh . . . hath everlasting life."--
St. John, vi. 55.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS, speaking to the Samaritan woman, said : "The water that I shall give, shall become . . . a fountain of water, springing up unto everlasting life."* Later on, addressing the Jews, he said to them : "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life." He thus calls our attention to the relations that exist between the Holy Eucharist and the life of the blessed, between the union with him in exile, and the union with him in our true country. Let us look at the subject from that consoling point of view, one so calculated to make us enter on, and continue in, the path of virtue.

Holy communion makes us think of heaven. How, in fact, can we eat the bread which came down from heaven, without raising our thoughts to heaven ? How can we receive the King of heaven without remembering his kingdom, where all good things are that can make us happy ?

* St. John, iv. 14.

It is natural that the figure, the symbol, should make us think of the reality. Does not the Eucharistic banquet represent the everlasting banquet of the elect? "Our Savior," says Bossuet, "wished that the last supper should be a true banquet, to form a social bond between his disciples, and to give them an image of the joy of that eternal banquet, in which they will be filled and inebriated with the abundance of his house, and drink of the torrent of his delights. On that account he celebrated the divine banquet in the evening, at the close of day, to remind us of that everlasting banquet he will give at the end of ages, when all things shall be consummated."

He himself directly teaches us this, saying to his apostles: "I appoint to you, as my Father hath appointed to me, a Kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom."* "I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father."†

Holy communion makes us experience something of the delights of heaven. "We only get a glimpse of the promised land," says the pious virgin, Marie Eustelle, "and already Jesus makes us taste of its fruits. That foretaste sustains our weakness until the veil is torn asunder, until the shadows disappear, and faith gives place to eternal and imperishable charity."

How happy is the soul that communicates with fervor! It feels that it possesses Him who is the happiness of the

* St. Luke, xxii. 29, 30.

† St. Matt., xxvi. 29.

elect! It does not see him as they do, but yet it sees him in a way that fills it with consolation. There is in it a ray of that splendor by which the Word of God inundates the inhabitants of the new Jerusalem with joy. It hears within itself some whisperings of that eternal Word who fills their hearts with infinite joy.

"That sacred bread," says St. John Damascene, "is as the first fruits of that supersubstantial bread which will one day be given to us."

St. Augustine says, in speaking of the same subject: "The Holy Eucharist gives us a glimpse of what we shall one day be; and this unknown ineffable happiness that must yet come, we ought to long for with sighs of love, yet with the holy joy that this first dawn of our future destiny gives us."

Holy communion, as the great bishop of Hippo reminds us, makes us long for heaven. It procures us, it is true, sweet consolations, but such as are only a shadow of the happiness to come. The reflection of a heavenly ray dazzles our eyes which are delighted to behold it; but it cannot satisfy us, for we long to look upon the sun himself who is its source. Do not the first streaks of dawn make us long for the morning and day itself? What are the joys of the Holy Eucharist but a pale reflection of the dawn of the eternal day?

The soul experiences inexpressible delight in beholding itself united to Jesus Christ, who has come down to visit it; but it immediately understands how infinitely greater will be its happiness when seeing him face to face, and when it shall possess him. not for a few transitory

moments, but for ever. Therefore, it repeats those words of the Gospel: “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God;”*, or these others of the *Imitation*: “I possess my Savior, but I see him only by faith, while the saints behold him face to face and through no veil. I must be content with the light of the true faith, until the eternal day begins to dawn, and the shades of figures disappear.”†

Holy communion makes us hope for heaven, of which it is the pledge, and makes us say with Albertus Magnus: “In the pilgrimage of this world, we take the divine food veiled under the appearances of bread and wine; but in our true country we shall behold in the light of God truth itself who shall be to us the food of eternity.”

Jesus Christ who gives himself to us here below, wishes also to give himself to us in the next life, as the Church teaches us by these words of the Office: “O sacred banquet wherein a pledge of future glory is given us!”‡ It is on that account St. Bernard exclaims: “Rejoice, Christians souls! break forth into transports of joy; you possess, you have in your hands, the pledge of your eternal union with the heavenly spouse.”

Jesus in coming to us, marks our souls with the seal of the elect. He says to us in the depths of our hearts: I call you to my inheritance, and already I give it to you—that very inheritance whose beauty, now veiled, will one day be revealed to you. Be faithful to me; and, fed with the bread of angels on this earth,

* St. Luke, xiv. 15.

† Book iv. ch. xi. 2.

‡ Antiphon, *O sacrum.*

you will be admitted to partake of it with them in heaven.

Holy communion is to us a means of attaining to that good which is the object of all our wishes. The Church reminds us of this truth, saying to the adorable Victim of our altars : “O saving Host, thou openest to us the gates of heaven,”* and by putting into the mouth of the priest who gives communion to the faithful, these consoling words : “ May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul to eternal life.”†

Heaven is the reward of virtue : now, what makes virtue so easy to us as union with him who has said : “ I am the vine, you the branches ; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit ; for without me you can do nothing ? ”‡

It is true, then, that “ the divine food given to us at the altar, prepares us to receive the food of immortality one day under its pure form.”§

APPLICATION.

How admirable are the effects of the Holy Eucharist ! How they raise man towards God and the things of God ! How they make him think on heaven, love and desire heaven, and work for heaven.

But are these effects produced in us ? Do we occupy our mind and heart with the thought of that, our true country, to which we expect to go ? Are we, as far as is possible in our exile, citizens of heaven ? What are we doing to reach heaven ?

* Hymn, *Verbum Supernum.* † Liturgy. ‡ St. John, xv. 5.

§ Monseigneur Landriot.

Let us think of this in presence of Jesus in the blessed sacrament ; and if our conscience do not give us satisfactory testimony as to it, let us seek the cause. Let us ask ourselves, why are we still so earthly, so much the slaves of our senses, so absorbed in the cares of this world ?

Is it not because we do not communicate often enough, because we neglect to feed ourselves with the heavenly food which makes us like to God ? Is it not because we do not communicate with the piety and fervor which that holy action requires ?

Is it not because we do not prepare ourselves for it as we ought, or because we make our thanksgiving very imperfectly ? Is it not because, by our want of fidelity to graces received, we put obstacles to the efficacy of this sacrament—because, by a life too much devoted to external things, we squander the spiritual treasure we have received ?

Let us reform our conduct ; let us enter seriously into the practice of devotion to the Holy Eucharist, “which alone sweetens our exile, and makes us taste the first fruits of the promised land, whilst waiting till the veil is rent, till the shadows disappear, and the dawn of the everlasting day breaks upon our sight.”*

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! O Love ! thou comest to me, to bring me to thee ; thou desirest to make but one with me in time, that I may make but one with thee in eternity. With

* Marie Eustelle, Letter 129.

transports of gratitude I bless thine infinite goodness, begging thee to fulfil in me the work thou hast begun, so that thy sacred body may preserve my soul to eternal life, and that I may partake in thy kingdom of the banquet prepared for thine elect. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 351.)

FORTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

ON THE JOYS OF HOLY COMMUNION.

“Taste and see that the Lord is sweet.”—Ps., xxxiii. 9.

CONSIDERATION.

HAPPINESS is the full satisfaction of the lawful desires of the soul. Ah! is it not enough to define it, to know that it has no existence in this world?

Created for the beauty of heaven, man has immense insatiable desires; his heart is devoured by a craving to possess infinite good for eternity; and that craving can not be satisfied in this life, so wretched and transitory. The word “happiness” belongs to the language that man spoke in the earthly paradise, but it represents nothing really existing on this earth. Therefore, it would awaken in our souls only a memory and a regret, were it not for the hope of supreme happiness of which the Holy Eucharist is the pledge, and a shadow of which sometimes falls upon us when, with piety and fervor, we partake of the heavenly banquet.

O joys of holy communion! every thing speaks of you, and reveals you to attentive minds: the prophecies, the gospel, the Church, the saints, the faithful poor,—a thousand voices unite in proclaiming your reality, and celebrating the sweetness of the Eucharistic banquet.

Jacob, when prophesying the divine food which would be given to men, said that it would "yield dainties to kings."* "O children of men," exclaims King David, "taste and see that the Lord is sweet. O God! it is thy mercy that maketh the children of men find shelter under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasures."†

"O God," says the wise man, "thou didst feed thy people with the food of angels, and gavest them bread from heaven prepared without labor, having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste."‡

Isaias says: "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Savior's fountains."§

"And it shall come to pass in that day," says the prophet Joel, "that the mountains shall drop down sweetness, and the hills shall flow with milk."|| .

Jesus Christ himself teaches us the happiness of holy communion, by saying to the Samaritan woman: "He that shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall not thirst for ever;"¶ and by representing the Holy Eucharist under the image of a marriage feast, and by instituting it at a festal supper.

The Church, the infallible interpreter of the doctrine of that divine Master, speaks frequently of the pure joys that union with him procures, and delights in her hymns to celebrate the sweetness of that heavenly food,

* Gen., xlix. 20. † Ps., xxxv. 9.

‡ Wis., xvi. 20. § Isa., xii. 3. || Joel, iii. 18.

¶ St. John, iv. 13.

which she calls “delicious food,”* “pure wheat,” “honey issuing from the rock,”† “the bread of angels.”‡

“As natural food,” says the catechism of the Council of Trent, “is intended, not only for the preservation of the body, but also for its growth, and even for its enjoyment and pleasure; in the same way the Eucharistic food not only supports the soul, but strengthens it and gives it a greater relish for heavenly things. It is, then, with reason we have said, that this divine food is justly compared to the manna which comprised every thing that could please the senses.”

Let us now hear the language of the saints and doctors of the Church on the happiness of holy communion:—

“O delicious bread,” exclaims St. Anselm, “heal my heart that I may taste the sweetness of thy love; deliver it from all lukewariness, that it may taste no other sweetness than in thee alone.”

“More fortunate than the Jews who lived upon manna, holy souls,” says St. Cyprian, “here taste the most exquisite sweetness, infinitely surpassing the rarest pleasures of the world.”

“No one,” says St. Thomas Aquinas, “could express the ineffable sweetness of this mystery, by which we taste of spiritual delights at their very source, and which so visibly recalls to our memory the excess of love Jesus Christ has shown us in dying for us.” “By virtue of this sacrament,” says St. Catherine of Sienna, “my heart

* Antiphon, *O quam suavis est.* † Introit, *Cibavit.*

‡ Hymn, *Sacris.*

is so inflamed that material fire seems to me cold in comparison; I am so filled with joy that I can no longer contain myself, and I am astonished not to see my whole being dissolve."

"O Jesus, my dear Master!" says the Blessed John Berchmans, "what is there after divine communion that can give me pleasure and content!"

In the same way, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, St. Teresa, St. Bernardine of Sienna, St. Magdalene of Pazzi—and with them a great number of holy persons of all ranks and conditions—have spoken on this subject.

Ah! how many have experienced sentiments like these which Père Hermann expresses in the following lines, dictated by the fervor of a heart recently converted: "O Jesus, my love! how I should wish to inflame my friends of other days with the ardor that now consumes my heart! Yes! I venture to say, if faith had not taught me that to behold you in heaven is a still greater joy, I could never think it possible that there was any happiness sweeter than that of loving you in the holy Eucharist, and receiving you into my poor heart made rich by you. What delicious peace! what happiness! what holy joy! . . . O my friends! come then to this heavenly banquet; and with a new heart, a pure heart, drink at the limpid fountain of the love of God."

Yes, the Holy Eucharist is the source of peace, content, and joy, and we can exclaim with the pious author of the *Imitation*: "O God, the invisible Creator of the

world, how admirable is thy conduct towards us ! With what goodness and sweetness thou dost treat thine elect, to whom thou givest thyself as their food in this holy sacrament !”*

APPLICATION.

Let us love the joys of holy communion, but without becoming attached to them, for of themselves they are no more a sign of fervor than other spiritual consolations.

Nevertheless, let us desire them, and do what is possible on our part to experience them.

Let us despise earthly pleasures so vile, so perishable compared to the delights experienced in a fervent communion. Let us enter into the spirit of these words of St. Augustine : “ Foolish lovers of the world,” he exclaims, “ where are you going to seek contentment of heart ? Jesus alone can give it.”

Let us not seek our consolation but in Jesus, saying with the author of the *Imitation*: “ In thee is all whatsoever I can, or ought to desire.”†

Let us love him with all the powers of our soul. Let us love him with all our heart, and with a love of sacrifice. “ The beloved disciple reposing on the bosom of our Savior,” writes the pious Marie Eustelle, “ not only penetrated into the divine secrets he was to reveal to men ; he also drew thence those magnanimous sentiments that were to sustain him during his apostolate, and in the presence of persecutors. In imitation of him, let us not seek sweetesses and the repose of holy love ;

* Book iv. ch. i. 10.

† *Ibid.*, ch. iii. i.

let us aspire by a life of sacrifice to the far truer, far safer, far more perfect love of Jesus crucified. Let us not forget that for great souls Thabor is on Calvary."

Let us appreciate more and more the adorable sacrament which is the source of joy, strength, and courage, to the faithful soul. Let us frequently have recourse to it with purity, piety, and charity. Let us bring to the holy table the same dispositions that the saints brought, and like them we shall here below taste the sweetness of the divine food, by the aid of which we shall become worthy partakers of it in heaven.

PRAYER.

"Behold I come to thee, O Lord ! to profit by thy gift, and to experience the delights of thy sacred banquet, which in the excess of thy goodness, O my God ! thou hast prepared for the poor."

"O good Jesus ! grant to thy servant to feel, at least, from time to time in holy communion, some spark of thy love, so that my faith may be more and more strengthened, my hope in thy goodness increased, and my charity being once well inflamed by the effect of this heavenly manna, may never be extinguished."*

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 251.)

* Imit., book iv., ch. iii. 1; xiv. 2.

FORTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

REASON OF THE JOYS OF HOLY COMMUNION.

"I have found him whom my soul loveth."—Cant., iii. 4.

CONSIDERATION.

HOLY COMMUNION is to the fervent soul an abundant source of light, strength, peace, consolation, joy, and happiness. In the participation of the divine banquet we find true happiness. Ah! how could it be otherwise? We then possess God himself who came to us through love, and to enrich us with his favors! "My tears have been my bread, day and night," said King David, "whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?"* Separation from God is in truth a source of profound grief; and, consequently, proximity to God, and union with him, should fill us with holy joy. What, then, does the soul of the Christian experience who has received Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and who, when it is asked of him, "Where is thy God?" answers: "He is in me and I am in him; he abides in me and I abide in him, he hath regard to my lowliness, and hath done great things to me, he who is all mighty, and holy is his name."† I can say with the Spouse

* Ps., xli. 4.

† St. Luke, i. 48, 49.

of the canticles : “ I sat down under his shadow whom I desired, and his fruit was sweet to my palate.”*

“ O most sweet Lord,” cries out the author of the *Imitation*,† “ how great is the consolation of the devout soul who feasteth with thee in thy banquet, where thou presentest him no other food than thyself who art his only beloved, and the dearest object of all his desires ! ”

O marvellous effect of thy love towards us, that thou, O my Lord and my God, who givest being and life to all things that live, shouldst deign to come unto my poor soul and fully satisfy its hunger with thy whole divinity and humanity !

O happy the heart, and blessed the soul, that deserves to receive thee, her Lord God, devoutly ! and in receiving thee, to be filled with spiritual joy !

Oh ! how great is the Lord she receives ! how amiable a guest does she bring into her house ! how agreeable a companion does she receive ! what a union she forms with a faithful friend ! How beautiful, how noble, and infinitely more worthy of being beloved is the spouse she embraces, than all else that is most amiable and most desirable ! ‡

Holy communion is to us a source of happiness, because of the intimacy we have through it with Jesus Christ, who is infinitely better to us than a father, more loving than a mother, and who humbles himself even to become our food : it is so likewise because of the goods it puts us in possession of, or gives us a future right to.

* Cant., ii. 3. † Book iv. ch. xi. 1. ‡ *Ibid.*, book iv. ch. iii. 4.

"And in truth, what treasure," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "can be imagined more precious than the sacred body of Jesus Christ? Although that divine Savior should merely come to us without favoring us with any sensible consolation, should not that be sufficient to satisfy us? Yet, behold, he comes to us with his hands full of graces!"

With every communion well made, our understanding is enlightened with a clearer light, our heart inflamed with a more ardent love, our will more resolutely fixed upon doing good, our conscience more securely anchored in tranquil waters, and from that spiritual progress true contentment of heart must result as of necessity. The faithful soul who communicates has his desires more completely satisfied than any one else. Ah! let us not forget that our desires are infinite, and that the possession of God alone can appease them. Now, who possesses God more fully than he who is fed with God?

"In the reception of the Holy Eucharist," says a pious author,* "the heart feels that it is in its true centre, and that it possesses the God who is its true rest. This precious union makes us partakers of the happiness of the blessed. We do not, like them, see God face to face, but we carry him within us; we possess him who is the glory of the elect: nothing is left to desire if not to contemplate what we hold, to pierce the veil which hides Jesus Christ from our eyes, and thus discover this well beloved Savior."

"The faithful Christian who communicates," says St.

* Monseigneur Marguet.

John Chrysostom, "has no reason to envy those who had the happiness to see, hear, and touch Jesus Christ during his mortal life. Like the aged Simeon, he presses in his arms the divine child, and can sing the *Nunc dimittis*: 'Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace: because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people of Israel.'* Like the disciple of love, he reposes on the breast of his divine Master, listens to the beatings of his adorable heart, and is pierced by the pure flames that radiate from it as from a burning furnace."

"This sacrament," say Pope Innocent III and St. Thomas, "increases the fervor of the soul, fills us with spiritual joy, and sometimes procures for the soul the inebriation of love."

Yes, it causes the inebriation of love, when Jesus Christ gives the soul a lively feeling of his presence within it. What a happy moment is that when it enjoys this favor! It seems to itself to have found heaven upon earth, to share in the happiness of the saints who see, love, praise, and bless God in heaven. It seems to it that the Lamb who makes the happiness of the heavenly Jerusalem, allows the veil to fall that hides him from our eyes, and permits it to contemplate him such as he is, until it is filled with light and love.

O divine Eucharist! O divine banquet! O feast of ineffable sweetness, how can we think of you without

* St. Luke, ii. 29-32.

a thousand times blessing your generous Author ! without devoting to him all we have and all we are, and regretting only that we have not more to give him !

APPLICATION.

Let us desire, but with a humble and regulated desire, to experience the joys of holy communion, and let us labor to obtain that grace. Let us reanimate our faith in the adorable presence of Jesus Christ in his sacrament. Let us penetrate the cloud behind which he hides himself, and look on him as Joseph and Mary looked on him in the crib and under the swaddling clothes in which he was wrapped.

Let us ardently long for his coming into our heart. Let us ardently desire the precious moment when he will visit us, who is for us all good, all riches, all peace, and all consolation. Let us, by his grace, excite our love towards him ; let us bring to his holy table a heart already inflamed with the fire of his charity, and ready to be consumed by contact with his adorable heart.

Let us remember that it is written : “ To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God.” * Let us secure that advantage for ourselves, by our victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. To attain to the enjoyment of God, the first means is to sever ourselves from everything that is not God : let us detach our hearts from creatures, and from all affection to the pleasures of earth. Let us seek no other enjoyments

* Apoc., ii. 7.

than those we find in Jesus, and he will lavish them on us.

Let us live in the greatest purity of body, mind, and heart, and in the practice of true piety. Let us have recourse frequently to the divine Eucharist, especially in our sufferings and trials : this sacred bread ought to be the daily bread of every soul that suffers, for it can transmute the bitterness of tears into sweetness. It ought to be the daily bread of every soul that fights the battles of the Lord, so that it may draw thence the force and vigor necessary to triumph over the enemy of virtue, and to merit by that triumph to be admitted to the banquet in the kingdom of God.

PRAYER.

“O Jesus who invitest me to thy holy table ! how I desire to taste its sweet consolations ! I know and confess that I am unworthy thereof, but by thy goodness and mercy I beg it of thee ; and if I am not allowed to drink of the fulness of that fountain, nor to drink till my thirst is quenched, at least I will put my mouth to the opening of that heavenly stream, so as to receive some few drops to assuage my thirst, that I may not continue entirely parched up and dry.”*

Be, O sweet Savior ! my only good upon earth, so that thou mayest be my sovereign happiness in heaven ! Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 352.)

* Imit., book iv. ch. iv. 4.

FIFTIETH MEDITATION.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HAPPINESS OF HOLY COMMUNION.

“If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the gate, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”—Apoc., iii. 20.

CONSIDERATION.

THE happiness which the fervent soul tastes in holy communion is real, intimate, peaceable, pure, salutary, ineffable, and superior to all other joys possible on this earth.

It is a real happiness attested by persons most deserving of credit, and which from time to time we experience in a certain degree when we approach with piety to the holy table. “Ask of the souls borne upwards on the wings of grace,” says the Baron de Geramb, “if the happiness of communicating is not the happiness of happiness.” But let us ask this question of ourselves. Where have we found sweeter contentment than in union with Jesus Christ? What day of the past shines forth as the happiest of our lives, if not the day on which we were first admitted to the divine banquet? And next to that, what others seem most prominent, but those on

which we have come with fervor to unite ourselves with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and have experienced the truth of what St. Clement of Alexandria says, that “the heart of God is a mother’s breast on which we forget all the sorrows of life ?”

The happiness of holy communion takes possession of our whole being, and sets it to rest in the repose full of abundance, of which the prophet Isaías speaks.* All our faculties share in it ; intellect, will, heart, conscience, even our very senses.

Oh ! who can understand the consolations and the joys of a soul that says to Jesus : “My sweet Savior, how I love to be with thee ! Oh ! how tender are the sentiments thou excitest in me ! God of love, object of all true happiness, what peace I enjoy when near thee ! What holy joy ! O divine Eucharist ! thou containest all delights. In thee, O my Jesus, are all good things, in thee is all love ! ”† Behold thou art with me, thou speakest to me heart to heart, and I speak in like manner to thee. Behold, thy heart and mine touch each other, unite, and make but one heart. . . .

That happiness is unaccompanied by satiety. The more we taste of it, the more we wish to taste. Our Lord in inviting us to holy communion, addresses us in these words of wisdom : “Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits. For my spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honeycomb. . . . They that eat me, shall yet hunger, and they that drink me, shall yet thirst.”‡

* Isa., xxxii. 18. † Baron de Geramb. ‡ Eccl., xxiv. 26-29.

It is a happiness which can not only be enjoyed without apprehension and regret, but which always, when looked back to, furnishes true satisfaction: a happiness honorable, elevating, and ennobling to man.

It is a happiness salutary in its effects. The soul that has enjoyed it feels only disgust for sensual pleasures. All that worldlings seek for becomes insipid to her.

She comprehends wherein is true felicity, and feels herself carried on to seek for it in Jesus alone. She loves that gentle Savior, and becomes attached to him with all her powers; she consecrates herself to his service, and devotes herself to promoting his glory. She says to him with all sincerity: I belong to thee, O my Beloved! and I am thine for all eternity. Let trials and crosses come; and to testify my love to thee, I will accept them with eagerness, and even with joy and gratitude.

The happiness of holy communion is ineffable. "It is so great," says St. Bernard, "that he who experiences it cannot tell all the happiness he feels." The soul to which our Savior makes his presence sensible, receives an impression of grace which ravishes her, and which she can neither explain nor comprehend. She can tell what her happiness is *not*, but she cannot tell what it *is*. To those who enquire what she has felt, she can only answer by silence: the consolations with which she has been favored, are a secret between her and her divine spouse.

"There takes place in the soul," says Mgr. Gerbet, "what human language is afraid to profane by expressing.

There are silence, holy desires, and prayer: the soul experiences indefinable emotions. In a thousand other circumstances, the joys of virtue are felt; in that alone do we experience all its sweetness. You afterwards seek the order of sentiments that took place, and you cannot find it. It has passed over the soul, giving it a glimpse of the highest meaning of that word, *happiness*, which belongs to a language that is lost, and of which we poor children of Adam have nothing but the ruins."

"The Eucharistic union is consummated," says Mgr. Gerbet in another place; "and from the countenance of the Christian who has had that inestimable advantage, a solemn and tender mixture of peace and fear, of suffering and pleasure, of life and death, is reflected. Contemplate the features of the Christian who adores his Savior within him: would you not say that if that mouth closed in recollection were to open on a sudden, a voice would issue thence, attempting, though in a plaintive tone, some heavenly canticle?"

O Jesus! when I possess thee, I say to myself, with the author of the *Imitation*: "Rejoice, O my soul, and thank thy God for having left thee in this valley of tears a present so magnificent, and a consolation so remarkable."* Yes, O Lord, I am happy. . . And yet I weep. Oh! it is because I am still in the exile of this life; it is because thou comest to me as a prisoner, a captive, and at sight of thee I exclaim: "When shall I behold thee in my true country? When shall I be united to thee in that union which makes perfect happiness?"

* Book iv. ch. ii. 6.

APPLICATION.

Let us often call to mind the pleasures of the Eucharistic table, and let them lead us to love the holy communion more and more, and to receive it as frequently as obedience will permit.

Let the Holy Eucharist be always our treasure and our love ; let us sigh unceasingly for that divine food ; let us hunger for the bread of heaven, as so many servants of God of every age, rank, and condition, have done. Ah ! what can we desire more than to receive and possess him who is our repose; our life, our supreme good ?

Sometimes a veil of *ennui*, melancholy, and sadness, covers our soul, and the heart feels tempted to discouragement : let us then have recourse to the holy table, and hope, strength, confidence, and serenity, will be restored to us. The Eucharistic banquet will procure us peace and joy, and we shall say to ourselves : O my soul, why shouldst thou be sad when thou possessest God himself, thy Savior filled with love, and who wishes to pour forth his graces upon thee ? Patience ! traverse with him the way of the cross, and through him thou wilt come to the repose of the elect. Yes, soon wilt thou see the doors to the eternal banquet open before thee.

In our temptations, let us think of the joys of holy communion, and protest to Jesus Christ that we wish to know no others in this life. Let us go to that divine Savior who wishes to satisfy the infinite cravings of our poor heart. Let us hear him saying to us : "If any

man thirst, let him come to me, and drink."* Yes ! come to me, poor souls, who thirst for happiness. Come and receive me, for I alone am your true happiness.

Let us go to him. Where else can we seek for that good which our soul longs for, which it earnestly calls upon, and for which it sighs unceasingly ? Oh ! what blindness is that of carnal men who seek it in the perishable pleasures of earth, in happiness poisoned by the joys of this world !

Happiness ! it dwells on the altar. Let us go then to the altar and remain there as long as possible ; and when we depart, let us still remain in mind and heart. Let us thus be all for Jesus in the blessed sacrament in time, and we shall be admitted to see, bless, and possess him in eternity.

PRAYER.

I return thee thanks, O Creator and Redeemer of men ! that in order to make known thy love for all mankind, thou hast prepared a great feast, in which thou givest thyself as our food,—no longer the figurative Lamb, but thy most holy body and precious blood, filling all the faithful with joy, with that sacred food, in which all the delights of paradise are found, and at which the saints and angels eat with thee, but with more joy and happiness."†

Oh ! grant that living by thee, and for thee, I may be found worthy to eat with thee at the table of the everlasting banquet. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 352.)

* St. John, vii. 37.

† Imit., book iv. ch. xi. 5.

FIFTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

ON DRYNESS IN HOLY COMMUNION.

"My soul is as earth without water unto thee."—Ps., cxlv. 6.

CONSIDERATION.

THE pious soul often finds sweet consolations in her union with Jesus Christ ; she says then with St Peter : "Lord, it is good for us to be here."* Yet it frequently happens that those consolations are withdrawn from her, that she approaches to the holy table without feeling the sweetness of the heavenly food given to her.

Who among us has not experienced these vicissitudes of sensible fervor and dryness, of peace and trouble ? So it is with the generality of mankind. The friends of God, the greatest saints, have experienced, at least in a certain degree, what we experience, and many have endured the greatest suffering on that account.

It is because it enters into the designs of Jesus Christ, to deprive us sometimes of all feeling of his presence, and to leave us in interior desolation. He wishes thereby to exercise our faith, to purify our charity, to give us occasion for humbling ourselves, weaning us from self-love, making us have recourse to

* St. Matt., xvii. 4.

his mercy, punishing us for some want of generosity in his service, for some resistance to his graces, and to cure us of self-love which finds entrance into everything, even to holy communion.

Spiritual dryness exercises our faith. To say to Jesus, "I believe," when one feels his presence, is not difficult, and is only in a small degree meritorious. It is like St. Thomas, when beholding him and touching his wounds, he exclaimed ; "My Lord and my God!" But could not that divine Master answer : You believe, because you have been consoled ; blessed are those who believe without having been so favored !

Dryness in communion purifies charity. Let us not forget that the love of God does not consist in tender affections and sensible movements of the soul towards the uncreated beauty, but in a determined will, firm and immovable to seek God for himself, in spite of everything and at every cost. Now, spiritual dryness helps to give this character to our devotion.

When our Lord visits us without making us feel his presence, he wishes to teach us to make more account of himself than his favors, to make us come to him for himself and not for ourselves, to make us appreciate the grace of his love for its essential qualities, and not for qualities purely accessory.

Jesus Christ deprives us of sensible consolations in communion, to preserve us in humility. Pride is subtle : it glides everywhere, even into actions that of their own nature are most holy. The soul that has for a long time experienced the delights of holy communion, is

naturally tempted to self-esteem ; self-love feeds itself on the very sweetness of the Eucharistic banquet. But the divine Savior who wishes our sanctification above everything, and who sees that his favors would become hurtful to us, withdraws them, and leaves us in aridity which is as much more painful, as the spiritual joys were lively that preceded it.

Then the soul, understanding that it is of itself nothingness and sin, worthy of all contempt, and that our Lord admits it to his holy table only through the effect of his infinite mercy, glorifies him in the manner most acceptable to him and most profitable to itself.

Jesus Christ sometimes deprives us of the spiritual joys of holy communion, because we have not been sufficiently grateful for those with which we were previously favored. Ah ! let us not forget that nothing is a greater preventive of the gifts of God than our ingratitude.

Sometimes, also, we experience no joy in holy communion, because we have neglected to prepare for it. Is it not, in fact, quite natural that, having made no efforts to secure recollection, we should be unable to keep away distractions at the very moment when Jesus Christ is in our heart ?

Still, the above are not all the causes of dryness in holy communion. There are souls who experience it, because they are assaulted by violent temptations even at the foot of the altar. In that state they cannot rejoice, and they come only to seek strength to combat, and courage to persevere in virtue : joy will not come to them but in the hour of triumph.

Others experience no joy in communion because, either from scruples, or with reason, they are uneasy with regard to their confession, and doubt if they are in friendship with God: their heart is like a vise, it cannot expand when it comes in contact with the heart of Jesus.

Such are the principal causes of those drynesses so afflicting to the soul. Let us see how they act in us, and remedy them as soon as possible, as far as it is in our power to do so.

APPLICATION.

Let us bring serious preparation to communion; and if necessary, let us have recourse to the sacrament of penance.

Let us on the previous evening meditate on the great action of the morrow. Let us make acts of faith, humility, and love, which will prepare us to make it well. Let us reanimate our hope, and reject all trouble and uneasiness.

Let us go to Jesus with freedom of heart, with love, confidence, and abandonment of ourselves to his divine will. Should a child who goes to his father tremble as if he was in presence of a judge? Slavish fear offends the heart of Jesus, because it mistrusts his goodness. Let us obey our director blindly: God cannot condemn us for having been obedient. Let there be no scruples, then, to put obstacles in the way of grace. "The throne of God's mercy," says St. Francis of Sales, "is our misery; and the greater our misery, the more extended should our confidence be."

Let us humbly acknowledge that we have no right to the favors of Jesus Christ, that he treats us beyond our merits even when he seems to leave us.

Let us not believe too readily, when we do not experience joy in approaching the holy table, that we lack the dispositions to communicate with fruit: we might be deceiving ourselves. There are communions exceedingly profitable which are unaccompanied by any consolation. Grace acts in a sphere superior to nature, and might have its effect without being in any way sensible. Let us believe that our communion has been good and even very good, if our conscience does not reproach us with any grievous fault, if we have done what we should to prepare for that sublime action.

Let us not abandon holy communion, even when it appears to contribute little to our advancement. If we do not grow, that is no reason why we should cease to take the food by which we live. This sacrament is not only food for holy and perfect souls, but, as St. Ambrose, St. Bernard, and St. Bonaventure teach, is a sovereign remedy for feeble and lukewarm souls.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, heavenly friend, how I love the sweetness of thy sacred banquet! and what delight to my soul when thou makest me feel thy presence! How I desire that thou mayst grant me that favor! Still if thou desirest me to be deprived of every sensible consolation, I resign myself to it for the love of thee; I will communicate in dryness and in tears, but I will ask of

thee the grace to make me draw from spiritual aridity the fruits of salvation it ought to produce according to thy merciful designs, so that serving thee with humility, denial, courage, and detachment from self, I may be admitted to enjoy thy presence in the true country where thou art the recompense of thy faithful servants.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 353.)

FIFTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

“Be sanctified; purify the house of the Lord.”—2 Paral., xxix. 5.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us bring to the holy table all the necessary dispositions, and let us, moreover, do what we can to bring to it such as are fitting and counselled. Oh, how many motives we have for doing so!

“Go to the people,” said God to Moses, “and sanctify them to-day . . . for on the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.”* Does he not with more reason say to us: “Sanctify your heart, where I wish to make my residence?”

David, when gathering together the materials for the temple of Jerusalem, exclaimed: “The work is great, for a house is prepared, not for man, but for God.”† Have we not reason to be penetrated with the same sentiment, and to say to ourselves: How great is the work to prepare my heart to become the temple of the thrice holy God?

What is not done in the world to receive a sovereign,

* Exodus, xix. 10, 11.

† 1 Paral., xxix. 1.

a prince, or even only a friend, in a becoming manner ? What should we not do to receive Jesus Christ ? Let us remember that he who visits us is the King of kings, the Master of heaven and earth, the Messiah expected by all nations, and who, coming into this world, was preceded by the holiest of men, exclaiming : “ Prepare ye the ways of the Lord, make straight his paths;”* that he is our most generous friend, alone worthy of all our affection. Ah ! let him find in our heart what may be agreeable to him, and let him find nothing there that could cause him displeasure.

What care the Church takes to adorn his altars and tabernacles, and to keep the sacred vessels in good condition ! Does she not, by that very fact, tell us to adorn the altar of our heart, and to beautify with virtues the sanctuary of our souls, that is about to be honored by the presence of Jesus Christ ? Or rather, does she not tell us by all the means at her disposal—the decrees of Councils, catechisms, instructions of her pastors, symbolism of worship, and exhortations of confessors ? “ If,” says the holy Council of Trent, “ no one should venture to exercise any holy function without a holy preparation, it is certain that the more holy and divine this heavenly sacrament is acknowledged to be by a Christian, the more careful he should be to approach it, and to receive it, with great respect and holiness.”†

Let us respond, as the saints responded, to the intentions of that loving mother. How anxious they were to prepare their hearts to approach worthily to the holy

* St. Matt., iii. 3.

† Sess. xiii., ch. vii.

table, and to come to the divine banquet, not only with the nuptial robe, but also with the flowers of the most admirable virtues! Let us, in this respect, recall the conduct of St. Teresa, St. Louis Gonzaga, St. Stanislaus Kostka, St. Magdalene of Pazzi, &c.

Why have we not the vivacity of their faith and the ardor of their charity? Like them, we should go to Jesus Christ with a heart well disposed, and that loving Savior would enrich us with the treasure of his graces.

Causes act according to the disposition of the subjects on which they act. Thus is it with the Holy Eucharist. If received by the soul in an unworthy state, it serves only to its condemnation; if received by a soul clothed with a nuptial robe, it profits it more or less according to the goodness of its dispositions.

“The greater the purity and avidity with which this bread is received,” says St. Jerome, “the greater are the graces we draw from it.” “When with a taper,” says St. Catherine of Sienna, “we light others, these last all receive the light and heat of the first, and the largest receive the most: in the same way, while participating of the Holy Eucharist, all the just receive the grace of the sacrament; but the best disposed receive it in greatest abundance.”

“I believe firmly,” says St. Teresa, “that if we approach the most holy sacrament with great faith and ardent love, one communion would suffice to make us rich: how much richer should we be by the great number of those we make!”

Do we not see that material food profits those who

receive it according to their dispositions? So is it with spiritual food, and especially with the Eucharistic bread. As seed bears fruit according to the goodness of the land in which it is deposited, in the same way the Holy Eucharist, the seed of life, virtue, and glory, produces its salutary effects according to the goodness of the soul that receives it.

Yes, every thing gives us to understand this: the better our dispositions shall be in approaching the holy table, the more graces of life, purity, light, strength, and holiness, shall we draw from it; the more will sanctifying grace increase in us. Moreover, every communion made in good dispositions, perfects those dispositions, and thus prepares us to draw still more fruit from the following communion.

APPLICATION.

Let us go to Jesus Christ with a heart well disposed, and he will show himself liberal towards us. Let us do all in our power, remembering that we shall be always beneath what he deserves. "Know," says he to us in the Book of the *Imitation*, "that of yourselves you cannot prepare yourselves by the merit of any action of yours, although you should employ a whole year in preparation, and should think of nothing else. But do what you can and do it carefully, and then I who have invited and commanded you to approach, will supply what is wanting in you."*

On that account, before communicating, let us prove

* *Imit.*, book iv. ch. xii. 2.

ourselves, and if our conscience reproaches us with any grievous fault, let us have recourse to the tribunal of penance.

To the preparation already sufficiently rigorous, let us add what the saints have added. Let us renounce sin, however light it may be, and reform in ourselves all that might be displeasing in the sight of the heavenly spouse who visits us. "Let us purify our will from all irregular motions, and even from those which are indifferent," as St. Francis of Sales tells us. Let our will desire nothing else than to profit of the heavenly manna prepared for us.

Let us free ourselves from all terrestrial, worldly, and sensual affections; resist the entreaties and the allurements of nature; let us subdue our passions, and bring to our Lord a heart exempt from all attachment to creatures.

Let us make war against self-love, avarice, sensuality, and vanity: none of those should appear in the presence of the Lord, no more than the idol of Dagon could stand before the Ark of the Covenant.

Profoundly penetrated with the greatness of the Holy Eucharist, of the liberality of Jesus Christ towards us in this most holy sacrament, let us go to him with a view to please him, to obey him, and to profit of his gifts.

Let us go to the holy table with a great purity of conscience, a firm and unshaken faith, and sincere devotion, a tender piety, an ardent charity, the pardon of injuries, a lively remembrance of the sufferings of

Jesus Christ, a respectful fear, a profound humility, a religious recollection, a holy eagerness for the heavenly bread, and with burning desires to unite ourselves to Jesus Christ.

Let us enter into the spirit of these words of St. John Damascene : "Let us approach the Holy Eucharist with a reverential awe, a clean conscience, an unshaken faith, and we shall be treated undoubtedly according to the firmness and constancy of our faith. Let us bring to the accomplishment of this duty, a purity of soul and body. Let us go to Jesus Christ with a holy ardor. Let us receive the body of the Crucified, with our arms crossed. Let this living coal, placed on our lips, before our eyes, and on our forehead, change us into itself, unite its flame with that of our desires, consume our sins, and shed its light in our hearts ; let that divine fire inflame us and make of us so many divine beings."

PRAYER.

Thou invitest me to thy table, O divine King ! but, alas ! I dare not approach to thee, loaded as I am with the weight of my miseries. Oh ! deign to prepare a dwelling in my heart worthy of thee : humble my pride, straighten my crooked ways, and correct in me all that is displeasing to thee. Thou alone, by thy grace, canst be thy precursor, and prepare thy way in my soul. Be so in effect, so that receiving thee with all the requisite dispositions, I may live by thee on earth, and abide forever with thee in heaven.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 353.)

FIFTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

THE PURITY OF CONSCIENCE NECESSARY TO COMMUNICATE.

“Let a man prove himself.”—1 Cor., xi, 28.

CONSIDERATION.

THE state of grace is absolutely necessary to communicate monthly. To approach the holy table, it is requisite to be free from mortal sin, under penalty of finding death in the sacrament of life, condemnation in the most powerful means of sanctification.

If, as the Mosaic Law prescribed, great holiness was required of the Jewish priests who offered up or ate the loaves of proposition, greater by far is the holiness enjoined on those who are permitted to nourish themselves on that sacred bread, of which the loaves of proposition were only the figure.

The Almighty, jealous of his glory, inflicted the most exemplary punishment on Nadab and Abiu for having kindled a strange fire in the tabernacle; he chastised in the same manner the Philistines for not having shown respect to the Ark of the Covenant; Osa for having touched it, and the Bethsamites for having looked, through curiosity, on what it contained. How

severely, then, will he not chastise those who dare to receive him into a heart sullied by sin, a heart which burns with a criminal fire, a heart in which the idol of Dagon stands; a heart, in a word, that has become the realm of Satan and over which he rules with absolute sway.

Let this be thoroughly understood, and let us not be so void of understanding as to approach the Lord of glory with other than a pure heart. He does not manifest himself to us in the midst of thunder and lightning, as he was wont to do of old to the Hebrew nation: still his prohibition stands equally applicable to us as to his chosen people. And this prohibition is, never to approach his holy mountain to unite ourselves to him, without first cleansing ourselves from all grievous faults.

The God of the Eucharist is the celestial spouse whose delight is to be in the midst of lilies. He enters the garden of our soul to gather flowers of innocence. He says to us in several places in Holy Writ: “Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.”*

The Gospel is most formal on this subject, whether it be in the parable of the prodigal son, who is represented to us as being admitted to his father’s table, only after he has been clad in his finest garments; or in that of the marriage feast, in which parable one of the guests is spoken of as having entered the dining room without a wedding garment. Beholding this, the king in indignation says to the waiters:—“Bind him hand

* Lev., xi, 44, 45; xix, 2; xx, 7-26.

and foot and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." *

Besides these, the Gospel presents us the dreadful example of Judas, who, having communicated with a soul polluted by sin, leaves the supper-room for the purpose of consummating his perfidious betrayal, which, alas! was to be followed so quickly by despair and death in sin. "Being wicked," says St. Augustine, "he received badly this inestimable gift:"—that which is by its nature the pledge of infinite happiness, he caused to become the source of his eternal damnation.

The Apostle of Nations teaches the necessity of the state of grace to approach the holy table, when he says:—"Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."†

To remind the faithful of the purity of conscience requisite for communion, the deacons, in the primitive ages of the Church, were accustomed to cry out in a loud voice to the congregation, "The things that are holy are for the holy."—"Such," says St. John Chrysostom, "are the terrible words we cause to be proclaimed throughout the sacred edifice, thereby to separate the sound sheep from those that are not, and to allow only the former to approach. We do not suffer the latter to remain without nourishment; but we cannot expose them to take an aliment which would become

* St. Matt., xxii, 13.

† 1 Cor., xi, 28, 29.

fatal to them, nor to drink the waters of a fountain, which to them would be changed into the rankest poison. If you approach the supper of the Lamb, all covered with blemishes, you should tremble and flee. But if you have the requisite dispositions, refrain not from the divine banquet under the plea that you are awaiting the coming of a festival. Every day that is filled with good works is a festival for the Christian soul.

St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Leo, all the doctors of the Church, in a word, speak in the same strain, and teach the necessity, the absolute necessity, of purity of heart for all who would approach the holy table.

Let us listen to what our holy mother the Church says on this subject. She styles the Eucharist the Sacrament of the Living, showing thereby that this heavenly food peremptorily demands the life of grace in those who partake thereof. “This nourishment is life for the just and death for sinners. This is the bread of Angels, the food of children which must not be thrown to dogs!”* “Therefore let us feast, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,”†—that is to say, with purity of conscience and with fervor.

Speaking by the Council of Trent, she says: “The Christian should be most careful in preparing for the reception of this sacrament, and should never receive it but with great sanctity, particularly after these terrible words of St. Paul, ‘He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself.’‡

* Prose *Lauda Sion.*

† 1 Cor., v, 8.

‡ Ibid., xi, 29.

It is for this reason that he who would communicate should remember this precept, ‘Let a man prove himself.’* Now the practice of the Church shows us that the necessary examination consists in this, that no one whose conscience is laden with mortal sin, let his contrition be what it may, should approach the holy communion without having preceded it by sacramental confession.”†

There is, then, nothing better established than the truth of the necessity of being in the state of grace to communicate. Let it, however, be remembered, for the peace and consolation of timorous souls, that the state of grace suffices, rigorously speaking, to not communicate unworthily, and even to make a very good communion.

The adorable body of Jesus Christ produces its salutary effects in the soul that is not in the state of mortal sin, which is the only impediment to the flow of the graces of this sacrament. “If I am in the state of grace,” says Bourdaloue, “I possess the degree of purity absolutely requisite not to profane the body of Jesus Christ in communicating; and not only not to profane it, but to receive at the altar renewed strength and a new increase of grace.”

APPLICATION.

Let us regulate our conduct in accordance with the truths and principles on which we have been meditating. Let us shun sin with the greatest care. Let us

* 1 Cor., xi, 28.

† Trid. Sess. xiii, ch. vii.

dread mortal sin more than all other evils together; and if, unfortunately, we should be in disgrace before God, oh, let us, without losing a single moment, approach the life-giving tribunal of penance; let us speedily reject the poison, and then approach and nourish our souls with the bread of angels! Let us not be satisfied, especially us religious, with that purity merely which is obligatory. We must efface every stain, every deliberate fault, all affection to venial sin, all that might afflict the divine spouse of our soul. Did not Jesus wash the feet of his disciples before he gave them his body and blood, thus showing that he desires the greatest purity of those whom he invites to his banquet?

Listen to what he tells us through the pious author of the *Imitation*: "I am the lover of purity, and the giver of all holiness. I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of my rest. If thou wilt have me come to thee and remain with thee, purge out the old leaven, and make clean the habitation of thy heart. Shut out the whole world and all the tumult of vices."

We must not, however, let the venial faults, which, through frailty, we so frequently commit, prevent us from approaching the holy table. The Eucharist was instituted for men, not for angels: and every man is a sinner. We must bear in mind that the poor, the maimed, and the lame are admitted to the marriage feast and partake of the sumptuous table of the celestial spouse, provided they are clothed in the wedding garment.

PRAYER.

“O Divine Lord! prostrate before thy adorable majesty, in the deepest humility of my soul I implore thy mercy, and entreat thee to prepare me thyself, that I may thus partake worthily of thy sacred banquet. O thou, the most beneficent of friends ! I give my heart and soul entirely to thee, beseeching thee to purify it in the salutary waters that flowed from thy adorable side ; to adorn it with the purple of thy precious blood ; and thereby dispose it according to thy good pleasure, by passing it through the flames of thy love.” (*Prayer of St. Gertrude.*)

Most holy Virgin, thou who hast merited to bear in thy chaste womb the Son of God ! obtain for me the favor of participating, at least in some degree, in thy stainless purity, that, when thy divine Son comes to take up his abode in my heart, he may find nothing that would offend him ; that every thing, on the contrary, may dispose him to enrich me with blessings for time and eternity.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 354.)

FIFTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

PREPARATION OF FAITH AND ADORATION.

“I have believed that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.”—St. John, xi, 20.

CONSIDERATION.

THAT the Eucharist may produce in us the superabundance of the fruits of salvation, it will not suffice to be merely in the state of grace; we must furthermore approach the holy table, deeply penetrated with a lively faith, a firm hope, great purity of intention, and a holy joy. Enlightened by revelation, we are obliged to have a firm belief in the Real Presence hidden under the sacramental species; to reject even the shadow of doubt; and to be more certain of the real presence of Jesus than if we saw him with our own eyes or touched him with our hands, being persuaded that the consecrated host is no longer bread, but the body of Jesus Christ,—that very same body which was nailed to the cross for the salvation of the human race.

“The first disposition requisite to communicate,” says the Council of Trent, “is to discern the holy table from profane ones; to distinguish the celestial from ordinary bread; and to firmly believe that the Eucharist contains the true body and blood of the same God whom

the angels adore in heaven, who causes the pillars of the universe to tremble, and whose glory fills the whole earth. This is, indeed, ‘discerning,’ according to the expression of the apostle, ‘the body of the Lord.’”

Let us make it our study to cultivate in our hearts this firm and lively faith which so animated the saints, that they fancied they beheld with the eyes of the flesh Jesus Christ hidden under the sacramental veils. “In proportion as our faith is perfect,” says St. Augustine, “will we receive the graces that flow from the Eucharist; for Christ has said, ‘Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.’”*

To faith must be added purity of intention. Let us always determine on some general and some particular end for which we intend communicating. It is incumbent on us to examine our wants, and to know perfectly well what we intend asking of our generous sovereign who deigns to visit our souls, and who is ready to lavish upon them his choicest favors. Let us never approach him without being actuated by the purest motives. “Beware,” says St. Chrysostom, “of going to the holy table through vanity, custom, or any other worldly motive.”—The only motive that should actuate us in presenting ourselves before the Author of grace, is to acquire the goods of eternity.

The spirit of penitence and the practice of mortification are eminently conducive to a thorough preparation for holy communion. As St. John the Baptist prepared the people for the coming of the Messiah, by preaching

* John, xx, 29.

baptism and penance, so it is by penance that the Church prepares her children for the reception of the blessed Eucharist. St. Paul expresses this in the following words, " You shall show the death of the Lord until he come."*—When we are preparing to receive the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, it is necessary, according to St. Gregory, to immolate ourselves before God in true contrition of heart; for we who celebrate the mysteries of the passion of Jesus Christ, should imitate these sacred mysteries. Our divine Lord will be really and truly a victim for us, when we shall have made a sacrifice of ourselves to him.—" No unbecoming thought should occur, nor any thing created take up our mind; for it is not an angel, but the Lord of angels, whom we are going to entertain."†

The deepest sentiments of admiration should fill our soul. Let us remember that he who comes to visit us, who becomes our food, with whom we become so intimately united, is no less than the God who, with a single word, created all things, and before whom all greatness is nothing; he is verily the King of heaven; the Son of God made man; Jesus, at whose name every knee shall bend of those who are in heaven, on earth, and in hell; Jesus the divine Savior, who, by a single word, hurls into the bottomless abyss all the powers of evil; Jesus, the victor over the world, over death, and over hell! Oh, then, let us be seized with amazement at the thought of the infinite condescension he manifests in deigning to come into our soul!

* 1 Cor., xi, 26.

† Imit., book iv, chap. 1, sect. 5.

We must also bring to the reception of the Eucharist a preparation of holy joy. Is it not said to us, as it was said of old to the shepherds of Bethlehem : “Behold ! I bring you good tidings of great joy ;”* or as it was said to the daughters of Sion : “Rejoice ! for behold your king comes to you, full of meekness and kindness ” ? †

We are invited to a divine banquet, to the marriage feast of the Lamb, which is a figure of the celestial festival we are invited to participate in throughout endless ages in the abode of the blessed. Oh, then, let our hearts palpitate with joyful emotion ! What a signal honor is conferred upon us ! what a union we contract with our adorable Master who permits us to repose upon his bosom, a favor he granted only to his beloved disciple !

O divine Jesus ! if our faith were more lively, did we more thoroughly understand who thou art that deignest to visit us, and the value of the gifts thou bringest us, would not our poor hearts melt with tears of happiness, merely at the thought of approaching thy holy table ? With thy beloved daughter, St. Gertrude, would we not cry out in ecstasies of joy : “O my unique love and happiness ! I feel an irresistible desire to possess thee. O thou the most beautiful of the sons of men ! I await thee with all the impatience of love. O thou fountain of sweetness, always overflowing with abundance ! O thou that surpassest all earthly delights ! come and take up thy abode in my soul ” ?

* Luke, ii, 10.

† Matt., xxi, 5.

APPLICATION.

That we may possess the dispositions spoken of above, let us penetrate ourselves thoroughly with the greatness, the sanctity, the majesty of the divine guest who visits us.

Let us contemplate with the eyes of faith the angelic choirs that encircle the holy tabernacle ; and, in union with them, let us adore the sovereign king who, through his infinite love, has become man's prisoner, renews incessantly his sacrifice for us, and humiliates himself so far as to become our food.

Let us, on the one hand, remember what we ourselves are ; and, on the other, what a debt of gratitude and love we owe the adorable Word made flesh, who comes to dwell in our souls.

Let us earnestly implore the grace necessary to receive him with a fervor equal to that with which the saints received him. That we may enjoy this privilege, we must exert every effort to render this grace efficacious ; and thus shall the adorable sacrament become to us what it was to them, our joy, our strength, our salvation.

PRAYER.

“ Prevent, O Lord ! thy servant in the blessings of thy sweetness, visit me with thy grace, that I may taste in spirit thy suavity, which plentifully lies hidden in this sacrament as in its fountain. It is thy will that I receive thee, and through love unite myself to thee.

Wherefore I implore thy mercy, and I beg of thee to give me for this a special grace, that I may be wholly melted away in thee, and overflow with thy love.”*

Grant that I may receive thee with the faith, purity, respect, and humility which thou desirest of me. This favor I beg of thee, strengthened by the intercession of thy most august Mother, in union with whom I now adore thee in the sacrament of thy love, and in whose blessed company I confidently hope that I shall be permitted to present thee my homages throughout eternity. Amen.

(SEE RÉSUMÉS, page 354.)

* *Imit.*, book iv. ch. iv. 1, 2.

FIFTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

PREPARATION OF HUMILITY AND CONFIDENCE.

“Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof.”—St. Matt., viii. 8.

CONSIDERATION.

WHEN we purpose to approach the holy table, we cannot be too deeply penetrated with sentiments of the profoundest humility, accompanied by the most entire confidence.

And who are we, who dare to receive Jesus Christ into our hearts? What have we of ourselves but misery, nothingness, and sin? Nothing, then, on our part can make us worthy of a visit from our Lord.

The Church teaches this in the most formal manner; for, before giving us the body of Jesus Christ, she puts these words of the centurion into our lips: “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof.” She tells us, by the Catechism of the Council of Trent, “to reflect within ourselves, and be well persuaded that we are most unworthy of the divine favor which we receive in the holy Eucharist.”

All the saints confessed that they did not deserve that Jesus Christ should visit them, and have said of

themselves, with St. John the Baptist : “The latchet of his shoes I am not worthy to loose;”* or with St. Peter, addressing our divine Lord : “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man ;”† or like the prodigal son : “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee : I am not worthy to be called thy son.”‡

They understood the greatness and the majesty of the guest who visited them in communion, and they said to themselves : “None but God can receive God worthily. Who am I, O Lord, that I should presume to come to thee ? Behold ! the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee ; and thou sayest, ‘Come you all to me.’ What means this most loving condescension, and so friendly an invitation ? How shall I dare to approach, who am conscious to myself of no good on which I can presume ? How shall I introduce thee into my house, who have oftentimes offended thy most gracious countenance ? The angels and archangels stand with a reverential awe ; the saints and the just are afraid ; and thou sayest, ‘Come you all to me.’”§

With the saints, let us humble ourselves profoundly before the Lord, and that will be for us an admirable preparation for communion ; for, “Happy is the truly humble soul. Jesus there takes up his habitation with joy. It becomes his tabernacle, his throne, his garden of delights. He makes it feel the sweetness of his presence ; he introduces it to the treasures of his divine heart ; to that sacred sanctuary whence there arise towards

* St. John, i. 27. † St. Luke, v. 8. ‡ St. Luke, xv. 21.

§ Imit., book iv. ch. i. 2, 3.

the Eternal, profound adorations, incomprehensible love, and acts of infinite value.”*

Let us always unite with sentiments of Christian humility others of most entire confidence in our Lord. We are unworthy, weak, infirm, tepid, and sick; but on that very account we are permitted to hope in him who is the source of riches, who is the sovereign power, the uncreated light, the furnace of charity, the fountain of life: and the greater our confidence, the more he will open his heart to communicate to us.

“O infinite Majesty,” exclaimed St. Liguori, “if you are veiled in your sacrament, it is merely to be always present with us, but above all to communicate yourself to our souls. But who shall dare approach you? . . . Ah! rather, who shall dare keep at a distance from you, our created love? You have hidden yourself in the sacred host, to enter into us and take possession of our hearts. You burn with the desire to be received by us, and you make it your happiness to remain united to us.

“From your tabernacles, you call men to you, saying to them: ‘Why do you not come to me who have so much love for you? Why are you afraid? I am not here to judge men, but to save those who have recourse to me.’”

“Most sweet Jesus! infinitely amiable Savior!” exclaimed St. Gertrude, “it is I, the most unworthy of creatures, who dare to come to you. Yes, in spite of my unworthiness, I purpose to receive the most holy

* Marie Eustelle, letter 102.

sacrament of your body and your blood, persuaded that I shall find there the spiritual remedy for all spiritual and corporal evils. On one side, I fear to wrong you by introducing you into the habitation of my heart, that accursed soil covered with thorns and brambles; but, on the other, I remember the blessed words that issued from your divine lips, for it is you, O infinitely good Jesus, who have said, ‘They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are sick;’* and it is you also, who have invited to your supper the poor, the blind, and the lame. On that account, presuming nothing in myself, but filled with a humble and pious confidence, I shall approach the table of your divine banquet.”

Let the sight of our unworthiness not only not keep us from the holy table, but make us approach it more frequently. We are miserable, but Jesus is merciful in his eucharistic life as well as in his mortal life; he does not repel sinners. He is always the good Shepherd seeking for the lost sheep, the charitable Samaritan pouring oil and wine on our wounds.

Ah! if we knew his heart better, we should know that goodness reigns there enthroned, and that he established the holy Eucharist, above all to show his love towards us, poor children of Adam. We should hear him say to us from the altar: “Fear not; have confidence; I am your God and your strength: I will save you.”

* St. Matt., ix. 12.

APPLICATION.

Let us acknowledge and confess that we do not deserve to partake of the bread of angels, but let us protest to our Lord that we go to him because of himself and of our miseries. Let us say to him with the author of the Imitation: "Whence comes this happiness to me that thou visitest me? Who am I that thou shouldest give thyself to me? How does a sinner dare to appear before thee, and how dost thou deign to come to a sinner?"

"Thou knowest thy servant, and thou knowest that there is nothing of good in him to make him worthy of thy favor. I confess then my unworthiness, and acknowledge thy goodness; I praise thy mercy, I give thee thanks for thy excessive charity.

"For it is for thy own sake thou dost this, not for my merits, that thy goodness may be better known to me, that greater charity may be imparted, and humility more perfectly recommended. Since, therefore, this is what pleaseth thee, and thou hast commanded it should be so, thy merciful condescension pleaseth me also; and I wish that my iniquity may be no obstacle."

Let humility keep us from presumption, but let confidence preserve us from that fear which closes the heart and leads to keep us at a distance from the holy table. Let us have in view, in every communion, the healing of some of our spiritual maladies, and, if permitted, let us communicate more frequently, the more infirmities

* *Imit.*, book iv. ch. ii. 1.

our soul is subject to, it being always well understood that we bring to this holy action the requisite dispositions.

Let us develop in our pupils these sentiments of humility and confidence which prepare us so admirably to receive with great efficacy the holy Eucharist, so that, communicating with respect and frequently, they may find at the holy table the strength and courage to enter resolutely on the good path, and to persevere in it till death.

PRAYER.

Thou invitest us, O divine Savior, to thy banquet where thou givest thyself to thy children! We shall go to thee with fear, but also with confidence. Thy divinity hidden in thy sacrament will fill us with fear; but at the same time thy infinite goodness, which in this mystery pours forth with profusion all its treasures, will permeate us with filial confidence.

In the sentiment of our unworthiness we shall cry out with St. Peter: “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man;” but, like the same apostle, counting on thy grace, we shall cling to thee and say to thee: “To whom shall we go, O Lord?—thou hast the words of eternal life.”

“Thou wilt receive us; thou wilt come thyself to us and into us. Yes, we hope, O Lord, thou wilt communicate thyself to us, until we shall be able, without a veil, and face to face, to see and possess thee in a happy eternity!” *

(SEE RÉSUMÉS, page 355.)

* “Thoughts of Bourdaloue.”

FIFTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

PREPARATION OF LOVE.

“I sought him whom my soul loveth.”—Cant., iii. 1.

CONSIDERATION..

It is above all by love that we must prepare for the reception of the holy Eucharist, which is, *par excellence*, the sacrament of love.

We strive, as much as depends on us, that the divine worship may be becoming, grand, and magnificent; let us strive also that the temple of our hearts, where Jesus comes to dwell, may be purified and adorned. But let us remember, the most precious of ornaments in his eyes is the gold of charity. Therefore, the Catechism of the Council of Trent lays down as a disposition for communion, the entering into ourselves, and considering if we can say with St. Peter: “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.”*

But what Christian, and, above all, what religious can say those words if he reflects on the love that Jesus has for us, and of which he has given a pledge in the holy Eucharist?

Oh, how should we not love that tender Shepherd

* St. John, xxi. 15.

— who feeds his sheep with his own flesh and blood ;—that divine Lamb who lies down under the sacrificial knife to save us from death ; that Liberator who broke the chain by which Satan held us captive ; that God who has become our companion, our friend, our brother, the spouse of our souls ?

How can we but love him, who for us comes down from heaven, works numberless miracles, conceals himself under the sacramental veils, that we may be enabled to go to him, and find rest in his heart ?

How can we but love that infinitely amiable Savior, who is the supreme happiness of the angels and saints, and of whom his heavenly Father has said, “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased” ? *

How can we but love him, who, being the Son of God, the Eternal, the Omnipotent, annihilates himself so far as to veil himself under the appearance of bread and wine, to become the good of our souls, and communicate to them life, strength, light, or rather every good thing ?

Yes, “The charity of Christ preseth us.” † Yes, “If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.” ‡

“That divine Redeemer who could save us by a single drop of his blood, or by the least of his sufferings,” says St. Francis of Sales, “so loved us, as to wish to endure all sufferings, and even death itself, to give us life ; and to preserve for us that precious life, he wished to feed us with that same body which he delivered up for us.”

* St. Matt., iii. 17. † 2 Cor., v. 14. ‡ 1 Cor., xvi. 22.

Ah! let us excite ourselves to receive with the most lively affection Jesus Christ, "in whom," says the author of the Imitation, "are found all the hope and merit of such as are to be saved; who is our sanctification and redemption, the consolation of pilgrims, and the eternal happiness of the saints;" and if we cannot be all heavenly, and all on fire like the cherubim and seraphim, at least let us neglect nothing to stimulate our devotion and prepare our heart, so that, while receiving this sacrament of life, we may carry away at least a spark of that divine fire.

It is the preparation of love, above all, that the saints brought to the reception of the holy Eucharist. They said to our Lord: "O only Son, O beloved of the Father, I acknowledge that thou art the object most deserving of being loved! I desire to love thee as much as thou deservest, as much at least as a soul can love. I feel too well that I do not deserve that thou shouldst come to me, but I know that thou seekest my love, O God of goodness, and I hear thee say to me, 'My Son, give me thy heart.'* Ah! that heart belongs to thee. Yes, I love thee: O God of all love, accept my heart, and in coming to reside there, change it, purify it, inflame it."† "I wish for thee only, O my Jesus, and I take no repose but when I rest on thy divine heart in holy Communion."‡ "Behold Jesus, behold my love! he comes to me who is the delight of my soul."§

Yes, it is thus the saints expressed themselves. The

* Prov., xxiii. 26. † St. Liguori. ‡ St. Catherine of Sienna.

§ St. Philip Neri.

thought alone of the holy Eucharist ravished them out of themselves. Buried in the sweetest contemplation, they shed tears of love before the tabernacle, and sighed with the greatest ardor for the happy moment when they should receive a visit from their beloved. Hence the happy fruits of salvation which they found in the reception of this sacrament; for those fruits—as the masters of the spiritual life teach—are in proportion to our love, and the purity of our love for Jesus' intention.

Let us then love that divine Savior as they have loved him, and he will favor us with the same gifts. Let us therefore, for him, love our neighbor whoever he may be, remembering that he said to his apostles, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you;"* and, as the Catechism of the Council of Trent teaches, it is an indispensable condition for communion to be in peace with others, and to love our neighbor sincerely and from the bottom of our hearts.

Let there be then no resentment, no antipathy. Let us know how to support the defects of our neighbor, to pardon them in all circumstances, and to love them always with the most affectionate love, most self-sacrificing, and unchanging love. Let us remember what Jesus Christ said: "If thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there shalt remember that thy brother hath any thing against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go and be reconciled to thy brother."†

The holy table is the banquet of the union of the

* St. John, xv. 12.

† St. Matt., v. 23, 24.

faithful. Let us bring to it a heart animated by the love of Jesus Christ, and that divine Savior will enrich it more and more with the treasures of his love.

APPLICATION.

Let us think often on the loving goodness of God who gives himself to us. Let us impress upon our minds the remembrance of his goodness and his liberality. Let us represent to ourselves Jesus Christ in those acts of his life that are most capable of making an impression on our heart, and, above all, let us remember the history of his passion. "Every time that you go to the holy table," says Louis de Blois, "remember with religious affection the boundless love with which the Lord our God wished to suffer and die for us."

Let us remove, oppose, and destroy all that can be to us an obstacle to our love towards Jesus Christ. Let us not suffer any ill-regulated affection to find admittance into our heart. Ah! why should this heart give itself to the creature when the Creator wishes to take possession of it? Let us make war on self-love, the irreconcilable enemy of divine love. Let us beg our holy patrons, and our good angel, to obtain for us the grace of belonging wholly to Jesus. Let us implore the holy and immaculate heart of Mary, begging it to make us partakers of her love.

Let us assure our Lord—as he himself counselled St. Mechtilde to do—that we regret not having it in our power to offer him all the desires and all the love with which the hearts of men were ever inflamed, and

according to the promise he made to his servant, he will receive that good intention, as if it were the very love we should wish to have in us. According to the advice of the holy Bishop of Geneva, "Let us propose as the end of our communion to advance in charity, for we ought to receive, through love alone, him who has given himself to us through love."

In the evening previous, let us make frequent acts of love for our divine Savior. Let us, as much as possible, entertain the thought that our good Master is about to visit us. Let us keep his law and our rules most exactly. Let us offer frequent prayers to him to beg of him that the communion we are about to make may rejoice his heart, and may be to us a source of the greatest blessings.

PRAYER.

"O Lord, who wilt grant me that thou mayest come to my soul to take possession of it, to reign there alone, to fill every void in it, to abide there always, to be to me in the place of everything, to diffuse through it a thousand sweet consolations, to intoxicate it, to make me forget my misfortunes, my disquietudes, my vain pleasures, all mankind, the whole universe, and to leave me wholly to thee, relishing the joy of thy presence, the sweetness of thy colloquies, the happiness thou hast prepared for those who love thee ! What can I have in heaven, or what can I wish for on earth, but thou, O God of my heart, my inheritance for time and eternity!"*

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 356.)

* Sentiments of St. Augustine.

FIFTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

PREPARATION OF DESIRE.

“As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after thee, O God.”—Ps., xli. 2.

CONSIDERATION.

How many motives have we to be penetrated, in reference to holy communion, with the sentiments expressed by holy David in those words: “As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after thee, O God;” or those with which the patriarchs and prophets were inspired, who, aspiring after the coming of the Messiah, exclaimed: “Let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Savior;”* “I beseech thee, Lord, send whom thou wilt send;”† “Send forth, O Lord, the lamb, the ruler of the earth, from Petra of the desert, to the mount of the daughter of Sion.”‡

It is a question in fact of receiving into our hearts the son of God, the Messiah promised to earth; of quenching our thirst at the divine fountain whence spring forth the waters of eternal life.

Oh, with what ardor the Christian soul should desire

* Isa., xlvi. 8.

† Exodus, iv. 13.

‡ Isa., xvi. 1.

holy Communion ! with what hunger it should feel itself devoured for that wheat of the elect which makes man equal to the angels ! Oh ! what thirst it should have for that sacred wine which buddeth forth virgins !

“ My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord,”* cried out the royal prophet : what would then have been his sentiments if, like us, he was himself to have been that house, if his heart was to become the tabernacle of the Incarnate God ? How earnestly he would have longed for the moment of such inestimable happiness ! Would he not have repeated unceasingly, “ Come, O Lord, come to reside in me, and to reign there over all the powers of my soul and body ”?

If the Queen of Sheba undertook a long journey to converse with Solomon, whose wisdom every one spoke of, what should be our eagerness to go to him who is wisdom itself, the new Solomon, whose knowledge and munificence are unbounded ; to him who is the un-created wisdom, beauty in its essence, the brightness of the Father, the substantial image of his infinite perfections ; to him who, possessing all the treasures of heaven, wishes to make us partake of them, and who makes it his happiness to console, enrich, and save us ! How can we dwell on these thoughts without sighing with all the energy of our soul for the moment when he will communicate himself to us ?

Yes, let us earnestly long for the signal favor of uniting ourselves with Jesus Christ ; let our hearts thus answer the eagerness of his heart. At the time when

* Ps., lxxxiii. 3.

he gave himself to his apostles, did he not say, “With desire, I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer”?* Has he not always that same feeling? Does he not address the same words to us from the holy tabernacle where he dwells? Is he not enamoured of our souls; and in the infinite glory to which he is raised, does it not seem as if something would be wanting to his happiness, if he did not come into our hearts to dwell there?

What! the Infinite, the Almighty, the King of kings, longs to come to us, to visit us, to enrich us with his favors; and we—poor, infirm, miserable creatures—do not still more long to receive him, to unite ourselves to him, to be enriched with his favors! What an unaccountable mystery, or rather what an inconceivable act of folly!

“Come to partake of this mystery,” says St. Chrysostom, “not with cowardice, tepidity, or dulness of spirit, but like one hungry who comes to seat himself at a splendid banquet, or a benumbed traveller who approaches a welcome fire.”

“Desire this saving and life-giving sacrament,” says St. Augustine, “with all the ardor of which you are capable; seek it with great avidity; always hunger for that delicious food which is the flesh of God.” “It is necessary,” says St. Bernard, “that the ardor of holy desire should precede the reception of our God.”

“The more the soul is eager and hungry for that divine food,” says St. Jerome, “the more it is capable

* St. Luke, xxii. 15.

of receiving it, the more it experiences happiness in it, the more it receives graces, the more its longing increases and grows ardent."

All the saints desired, with incredible avidity, to feed their souls with this adorable sacrament, and, as the time of communion drew nigh, they felt an inexpressible impatience and most heavenly yearning for this divine food.

The more they tasted the divine manna, the more they wished to taste it, thus experiencing the truth of these words of wisdom: "They that eat me shall yet hunger; and they that drink me shall yet thirst."*

Speaking to the God of the holy Eucharist, they thus expressed themselves: O beauty ever ancient, O beauty ever new, to possess you is all my happiness, to desire you, all my ambition! Bread of angels, with what eagerness do I raise you to my lips, and afterwards with what ardor do I sigh anew to nourish myself with you!

Thus they began on earth what they do in heaven, where the more they see and possess Jesus, the more they wish to see and possess him; where they are filled with his presence, without ceasing on that account to always long for it.

Finally, what is more likely to dispose Jesus in our favor, than the ardent desire to receive him? Does he not say by his most holy mother that he fills the hungry with good things?† Was not Daniel singularly favored by heaven because he was *a man of desires?*‡

* Eccles., xxiv. 29. † St. Luke, i. 53. ‡ Daniel, ix. 23.

One day the Blessed Margaret Mary laid open her soul to her heavenly Spouse : "O amiable Jesus," she said to him, "I wish to be inflamed with desire for you!" "My daughter," replied that divine Savior to her, "I take so much pleasure in being desired in my sacrament, that, as often as the heart forms that desire, so often do I look upon it to draw it towards me."

Happy then are the faithful who bring to holy communion this preparation of desire ! The Lord comes to them with joy, lavishes his gifts upon them without measure, and signs them with the seal of the elect.

APPLICATION.

Let us be well convinced of the need we have of frequently partaking at the holy table, so as to draw thence the strength to vanquish our evil inclinations, to triumph over hell, and to persevere in our vocation.

Let us beg of our Lord the grace to desire him as so many holy souls desire him who sigh with the greatest ardor to receive him. Let us excite in ourselves the sentiments which animate them, and produce in our souls acts thereof, saying to ourselves : "Soon will the moment come when the God of the angels will repose in my poor dwelling. Jesus, the eternal Love, the God with us, by the holiest of mysteries, will deign to unite himself to me who am so unworthy of his visit. Oh, how I desire the happy moment which makes my soul taste in anticipation the delights of heaven ! O sacrament of the altar, sole ambition of my heart, object of all my thoughts and wishes, thou art the infinite

treasure which alone is capable of satisfying a Christian heart!" *

If we do not experience these desires, let us deplore it, lamenting that we are thus all ice in presence of the furnace of love. At least, let us desire to experience them, and testify this desire to our divine Savior. Let us offer him, to supply for our coldness, the desire he had to give himself to us, and the desire which the most holy Virgin and the saints had to receive him in the adorable sacrament.

PRAYER.

"O most sweet Jesus, infinite Goodness, who hast said, 'If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink,' † I thirst for you; my heart sighs to possess you, and calls upon you with the greatest earnestness. Come, O cherished Spouse of my soul, and my only love; come, and from your riches supply my extreme poverty. Delicious Manna, come to appease my hunger. Yea, I feel an irresistible desire to possess you, and I expect you with all the impatience of love." ‡

Give thyself to me, and it is enough; for without thee all consolation is nothing to me, whilst with thee suffering is joy to me, temptation is triumph, and death is the entrance into eternal life.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 356.)

* Marie Eustelle, letters 32, 40. † St. John, vii. 37.

‡ Devotions of St. Gertrude.

FIFTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

PROXIMATE AND IMMEDIATE PREPARATION.

“He that is holy, let him be sanctified still. Behold, I come quickly.”—Apoc., xxii. 11, 12.

CONSIDERATION.

“THE Christian who communicates,” says Albertus Magnus, “ascends to our Lord ; he becomes partaker of his divinity and his humanity, in the same way as the Word came down upon earth and became partaker of our humanity.” What a moment then is that in which this favor is granted to us, and who can think of it without feeling himself impelled to prepare for it with the greatest care ? Ah ! let us be convinced of this, and redouble our fervor as the happy moment approaches when we shall go to banquet at the holy table. Let us do all we can to establish within ourselves peace of heart, recollectedness of spirit, purity, humility, confidence, love towards Jesus Christ, and an ardent desire for his coming to us.

Let us think on the greatness, the importance, the sublimity of the action we are about perform. Jesus is coming to us : our heart is to be the habitation of God ; we are going to give hospitality to the sovereign

Lord of heaven and earth. The Son of God, lowering himself to our nothingness, is about to descend into us, to penetrate our substance with his, to blend our body with his, our blood with his, to establish with us such bonds of intimacy, that no closer alliance can be conceived.

If a king, touched with compassion for one of the poorest of his subjects, went to visit him, to console him and heap his favors upon him, what would not this latter do as soon as made acquainted with a conduct so benevolent and so generous on the part of his sovereign? How he would hasten to put his dwelling-house in order, to make it as little unworthy as possible of him whom he was going to receive! Now, we are the representatives of this poor man, and are visited by the great King, the Lord of lords, the restorer of fallen humanity, by him who is for us all joy, all riches.

“God himself will come, and will save you,”* says the prophet Isaias. Let us then be filled with joy at such happy tidings, and let our soul repeat with the Spouse of the Canticles: “Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills. . . . Behold, my beloved speaketh to me: arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. . . . My dove in the clifts of the rocks, in the hollow places of the wall, show me thy face.”†

The Gospel relates that Zacheus, chief of the publicans, having climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus passing, that adorable Master, stopping, said to him:

* Isa., xxxv. 4.

† Cant., ii. 8, 10, 14.

“Zacheus, make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide in thy house ;”* and Zacheus, transported with joy, made haste to come down, and ran to prepare everything in his house, to receive in a worthy manner the divine Guest who was going to abide there.

But does not our divine Savior address us in the same words, and do us the same honor ? Does he not say to us, “I am going to abide with you, go and prepare everything”? Let us, then, with holy eagerness do what he commands. Let us hasten to prepare our heart, so that it may be pleasing to him, and that, enriching us with his graces, he may say of us: “This day is salvation come to this house ; because he also is a son of Abraham.”†

The more preparation we bring to the reception of Jesus Christ, the more his coming into our heart will be profitable to us, the more we shall be enlightened by his light, inflamed by his love, rejoiced by his sweetness, healed of our infirmities, defended against the enemies of our soul, excited to devotion, established in peace, encouraged in good, sustained in our weakness, sanctified, and made worthy to participate one day in the glory reserved for us in heaven.

The saints of all ages are, in this, admirable models to us. What care they brought to the proximate preparation for communion ! They thrilled at the announcement of the hour when they should receive Jesus Christ, and said with the prophet: “I rejoice at the things that were said to me : we shall go unto the house of the

* St. Luke, xix. 5.

† Ibid., xix. 9.

Lord.”* They had that happy moment always in their thoughts, and longed for it with the greatest ardor. They were recollected, they separated themselves as much as possible from creatures, turned all their thoughts towards the altar, rekindled all their devotion, and lived only for the divine Master by whom they were to be visited. All their conduct showed that holy Communion was to them an action by itself, absorbing all their soul, and for which they could not make too great a preparation.

Therefore, they found at the altar infinite treasures of grace ; there, they strengthened themselves more and more ; there, they enjoyed the sweetest consolations ; and, by virtue of the bread which was given to them, they walked with courage and perseverance along the narrow path on which they had entered, and whose end is the happiness they now enjoy,—a happiness which will be ours also, if we walk faithfully in their footsteps.

APPLICATION.

Let us imitate the saints. Like them, let us bring to holy communion the dispositions that secure its salutary fruits. Let us join fervor of spirit to an exemption from every grievous sin.

On the eve of the day we are going to communicate, let us think seriously on it. Let us offer up with that intention our prayers, and the work in which we are employed. Let us be more than habitually

* Ps., cxxi. 1.

recollected, modest, attentive to the presence of God, and diligent in correcting our faults. Let us impose some sacrifices on ourselves; let us mortify our senses, our mind, our heart. Let us address fervent prayers to our Lord. If we can, let us visit him in his holy tabernacle, and, above all, let us express to him our desire of being united to him, and beg of him to prepare for himself a lodging-place in our heart.

Before falling asleep, let us in thought visit him in his most holy sacrament, and bring forth acts of faith, hope, love, and desire; let us offer our heart to this God of love. Let us recommend ourselves to the most holy Virgin, St. Joseph, our good angel, and the saint whose feast is about to be celebrated. Let us fall asleep, if we may say so, at the foot of the altar. In our waking intervals, let us invoke with desire the King of heaven who is about to visit us; let us anticipate by our wishes the happy moment when we shall be able to enjoy his presence.

In the morning, when we awake, let us think on the great action we are about to perform, and let our soul indulge in the sentiments which that thought inspires

Let us afterwards read with devotion some passages in the fourth book of the *Imitation*, and feed our thoughts on them while going to the chapel. Let us recite our morning prayers with a holy zeal, and pray fervently with a view to prepare ourselves for holy communion.

Let us determine on what we most particularly desire to obtain from Jesus when he comes to us. Let us

offer our communion for a special end. Let us remember the souls in purgatory, and above all, those for whom we ought to pray on that day. Let us prepare beforehand the request we wish to make to the sovereign Master, to whom we are about to speak intimately.

Let us hear Mass with devotion. Let us enter into the sentiments which the prayer and ceremonies of that great sacrifice naturally excite in attentive minds, and which are so good a preparation for receiving the body of Jesus Christ. While reciting the *Pater Noster*, let us ask for that supersubstantial bread which is the life of the soul. Let us implore, through the Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world, the pardon of our sins. Let us forgive every one who may have caused us pain. Let us humble ourselves, and confess that we are unworthy of the visit of the Holy of holies.

Lastly, let us approach with confidence, love, and holy joy, and receive the gift of God by which all the treasures of grace are communicated to us, and which makes us live the life of God himself.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, whose charity has no bounds, and who, in spite of my unworthiness, wishest to admit me to thy holy table, grant that, receiving in thy sacred body, I may also receive thy spirit and heart. Grant that I may become truly humble while receiving God who has so humbled himself; that, while eating of thy crucified flesh, I may become truly patient; that I may have, in a word, the happiness of being wholly changed

into thee by the virtue and grace of thy divine sacrament. I beg it of thee by the intercession of thy most holy mother, and by the merit of the interior dispositions with which she received thee on the day of the Incarnation, and in holy communion.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 356.)

FIFTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

WHAT IS GIVEN TO US IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“This is my body This is my blood.”—St. Matt., xxvi. 26, 28.

CONSIDERATION.

JESUS CHRIST gives himself wholly to us in the divine Eucharist. We receive at the holy table, his flesh, his blood, his soul, his heart, his divinity, and with these gifts, particular graces, which are of infinite value to us.

To the flesh of Jesus Christ are attached the graces of purity and innocence, which combat the natural tendency within us to ease and sensuality, which moderate the fires of concupiscence, which make us less accessible to dangerous impressions, which sustain us against the weakness and frailty of our nature, and which give us, more and more dominion over our disorderly passions.

Our flesh weighs us down, bends us towards earth, and exceedingly inclines us to evil; it is to us a perpetual occasion of combats and alarms, and makes us

cry out with the apostle: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"*

Now the flesh of Jesus Christ, that adorable flesh formed by the Holy Ghost of the pure blood of the most holy Virgin Mary, acts in us in a quite opposite manner. It delivers us from the slavery of the senses, to place us under the glorious yoke of divine love. It is a celestial perfume, embalming our body, and delivering it from the corruption of sin. Under its influence, the fire of evil burns less violently within us, while that of charity goes on increasing. For the fire of the passions it substitutes a pure and gentle flame, rising unceasingly towards heaven. It beautifies the soul, sanctifies and consecrates it. It leaves in us a divine impression, and makes us lead an angelic life in a mortal body.

To the blood of Jesus Christ are attached the graces of energy in doing good, and also the expiation of our faults. It is a divine drink that animates us, sustains us, and gives us strength against our enemies and ourselves, to make us enter courageously upon the laborious career of penance, to keep us therein till the end.

The faithful who communicate with fervor are strengthened by the blood of Jesus Christ, warmed by its divine fire, ready to undertake every thing for the love and glory of him who shed it for us on Mount Calvary, and who gives it to us in this adorable sacrament.

They who receive it are marked with the sign of salvation. The destroying angel will pass far from them, and,

* Rom., vii. 24.

on leaving this world, they will be admitted near the throne of God ; for the blood of the Lamb satisfies for sin, appeases the justice of the Father, and gives us a right to infinite mercy.

“ By the virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ,” says St. Cyril of Alexandria, “ the empire of death is ruined to its foundations.” “ That blood,” say St. Chrysostom, “ gives us living traits of resemblance to our divine King, communicates to our souls unparalleled beauty, and clothes them with eternal youth. When received with becoming dispositions, it banishes the devils, and keeps them at a distance from us, while it gains for us the friendship of the angels and of the Lord of the angels.” “ O blood of Jesus Christ,” exclaimed St. Bernard, “ you are our ransom on the cross, our drink on the altar, and our advocate in heaven, with the Father whom we have so much offended ! ”

To the sacred heart of Jesus Christ received in the Eucharist, is attached a grace of unction and love which satisfies and rejoices our soul, and which, detaching our hearts from all affection to creatures, makes us repeat, with transports, these words of St. Francis of Assisium : “ My God and my all ! ” or say with St. Liguori : “ Let who will seek other good things, O my Jesus, I love to seek and wish for no other treasure than your love ! ”

Ah ! could it be otherwise ? Is not the heart of Jesus Christ the very furnace of pure love, the sun from which charity radiates, and whose heat penetrates souls to make them produce the fruits of all virtues ? By holy

Communion we communicate with that divine heart, we unite to it our hearts, which, unless through some obstacle on our part, then shares abundantly in its sacred fire.

Jesus Christ in giving to us his most holy soul, communicates to us the graces of supernatural light and of an interior life. He enlightens us in all that is important for us to know. He shows us the path we ought to follow to attain to salvation; he scatters our darkness, enlightens our doubts, and delivers us from false prejudices, obstinacy, and error.

He withdraws our thoughts from too much attention to creatures to make us attentive to the action of his grace upon us. He makes us live by his life. He thinks in us, he loves in us, he wishes in us and by us, provided that by his grace we come to wish as he does. Our works are made through him, great, pleasing to God, and meritorious for heaven.

Each good communion makes us advance in virtue, makes us become more regular, more obedient, more faithful, more zealous, and more conformable to the adorable Master who visits us.

To the divinity of Jesus Christ are attached the graces of perfection, elevation of sentiments, and fervor. By contact with God, man becomes in some sort divine; his intelligence and his heart are borne towards eternity; his thoughts and sentiments find their home in the heavenly city, and no longer in this life of passage and misery.

“The holy Eucharist,” says Mgr. Landriot, “works in

us, transforms us, defies, as it were, our body and our soul." The Christian who partakes of it often, with purity of conscience and good will, draws from it a spirit of devotion to the practice of virtue, zeal for his spiritual advancement, true piety, a relish for heavenly things, and godlike sentiments, which are to him an unceasing source of the most precious merits for eternity.

Finally, to the sacrament of the holy Eucharist is attached a grace of spiritual food and nourishment, that sustains the soul, recruits its strength, makes it increase in virtue, and fills it with holy joy.

APPLICATION.

Let us rejoice because of the holy Eucharist ; "let us thank God for having left us so singular a consolation in this valley of tears ;" * for having opened to us in our exile here below, so abundant a source of graces. Let us go frequently to draw from that source. Let us hasten to the holy table where the bread of angels, the bread of life, the food of God himself is given to us.

Let us prepare ourselves for receiving it, and for this purpose let us purify our mind from every worldly thought, our memory from every profane or dangerous remembrance, our heart from all attachment to creatures ; let us renew within us our sentiments of faith, confidence, love, and admiration towards Jesus Christ considered in his divine sacrament.

Let us know how to profit by the happy moment in

* Imit., book iv. ch. ii. 62.

which we possess in our heart the Author of grace, and from whom we are permitted to draw in abundance the treasures of heaven. Finally, let us watch over ourselves so as to preserve the fruits of our communion.

Let us be attentive to watch over our senses, and above all, our eyes, to shun the world, and faithfully observe our rules; let us study to increase in piety, charity, and zeal for our perfection; let us show ourselves after each communion, more obedient, more recollected, more regular, more courageous, and more persevering in the discharge of our duties as religious and as masters.

Let us thus show that the holy Eucharist bears fruit in us, that it truly makes us live the life of Jesus Christ upon earth, and prepares us to live with him in heaven.

PRAYER.

Soul of Jesus sanctify me; body of Jesus save me; blood of Jesus inebriate me; water from the side of Jesus wash me; heart of Jesus inflame me; passion of Jesus strengthen me!

O good Jesus hear me! hide me in thy wounds; do not suffer me to be separated from thee; defend me from the malice of my enemy; call me at the hour of death, and grant that I may go to thee to praise thee with thy saints through all eternity. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 357.)

SIXTIETH MEDITATION.

IMMEDIATE THANKSGIVING.

“What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that he hath rendered to me ?”—Ps., cxv, 12.

CONSIDERATION.

“THE most precious time, and that which ought to be best employed,” says St. Francis of Sales, “is the moment of communion and those that immediately follow it. Let us then renew our acts of lively faith and profound adoration; let us arouse and invite all the powers of our soul to come and do homage to Jesus Christ in us; let us testify to that divine Savior, by a thousand holy affections, our gratitude and love: let us treat with him concerning the affairs of our soul; let us so conduct ourselves, that it may be known that God is with us.”

All the masters of a spiritual life insist on this point, and say with the pious author of the Imitation: “You should not only excite yourself to devotion before communion, but you should also keep it alive after having received. You are none the less bound to vigilance that follows after, than to a good preparation that goes before communion.”

St. Theresa, speaking on this subject, is most careful to remind her sisters to rekindle all the fervor of their souls, during the thanksgiving after communion. She is not afraid to affirm that the principal cause which prevents so many from profiting by communion, is the neglect to entertain themselves with their divine Guest after receiving him in this holy sacrament.

“Let us remain with Jesus Christ,” says she; “let us lose not a moment of time so favorable for obtaining favors from him, for moments are precious in holy communion. Ah! since we know that our good Jesus remains with us until the accidents of the bread have been consumed, we ought to avoid losing this favorable opportunity of laying before him all our wants. He rewards a hundred-fold the reception we give him. Having received him, let us close the eyes of our body, but open those of our soul, and look into our heart. The divine Savior has there placed himself as on a throne of grace, whence, he seems to say to us as to the blind man of Jericho: “What wilt thou that I should do to thee?” *

St. Magdalen of Pazzi holds the same language: “The moment that follows holy Communion is,” she says, “the most precious in life, the most suitable for treating with God, and of filling our hearts with his divine love.” “It is in our power,” adds Father Avila, “to gain, during that moment of blessing, immense treasures of grace.”

This the saints and friends of God understood admirably, as the example of their lives proves.

* Mark, x, 51.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga employed two hours in thanksgiving, and they were always ended too soon for his wishes, so absorbed was he in the God of love whom he had the happiness of possessing. The countenance of St. Alphonsus Liguori shone at the moment of communion with supernatural fire. As soon as he had received his God, he retired apart, and gave himself up to the effusions of his love, and the most lively transports of joy and gratitude. He was almost always, at that moment, filled with happiness, and it is impossible to find words to express the contentment his soul experienced in the midst of a multitude of heavenly spirits who praised and adored their God present in his heart.

What transports, what emotions of love for Jesus, were felt during time of thanksgiving, by St. Philip Neri, St. Gertrude, St. Stanislaus Kostka, &c.! May it be so then with us. Let us think that we possess in our hearts the Lamb of God who constitutes all the glory, and all the happiness of the elect, and who, giving ear only to his goodness, did not disdain to come down from heaven to our littleness, and our nothingness. Let us remember that negligence during thanksgiving grieves him, ignores his majesty, constitutes an irreverence, a forgetfulness of our duties, and deprives us of numberless graces.

Jesus is in us with his infinite merits, which he places at our disposal. He entrusts to us the key of the treasures of heaven, and urges us to make them ours. How then could we fail to profit by that op-

portunity of enriching ourselves? How could we do otherwise than apply all the powers of our mind and heart to render to our divine Guest the homage due to him, and to beg of him to exercise towards us and our brothers his clemency and liberality?

Yes, if we understand our true interests, if we have at heart to profit by the gift of God, to give joy to the heart of Jesus, to walk in the footsteps of the saints, we shall apply ourselves with all possible fervor to make our thanksgiving well. How we shall congratulate ourselves on it, on that day when we shall see clearly all the fruits of salvation which shall be our recompense for such fidelity!

APPLICATION.

“When you have communicated,” says St. Chrysostom, “recollect yourself, and think most attentively on the honor God has done you. Remember that he is himself within your breast; weigh the incomparable benefit you have received from his divine hand, a benefit so great, that neither you, nor I, nor any other mortal could ever have imagined it, much less asked it. Behold the angels around you! they are astonished and filled with amazement at seeing such an excess of love. They do not cease to return thanks, to sing his praises and mercies: could you then fail to praise with all your strength that God so good, who has become the food of your souls?”

Let us say then to this God of infinite goodness who wishes to dwell in our hearts: “O my beloved Lord,

how can you condescend to come to me? How great a grace is that with which you favor me! Oh my love, why have I only one heart to love thee? Why have I only one life to consecrate to thee? To supply for the imperfection of my gratitude, I offer thee the thanksgiving of thy most holy mother on the day when the great mystery of the Incarnation was wrought in her; I offer thee also the thanksgiving and transports of all thy saints at the moment when they had the happiness of possessing thee, as I now do.

Let us hear Jesus saying to us: As I willingly offered myself to God my Father, for thy sins, with my hands stretched out upon the cross, and my body naked so that nothing remained in me which was not turned into a sacrifice to appease the divine wrath even so must thou willingly offer thyself to me daily in the Mass for a pure and holy oblation.

Let us answer him with St. Liguori: "O Lord, I give myself to thee for ever. I consecrate to thee my understanding that it may always think on thy goodness; my will, that it may correspond to thy love; my body, that it may aid me to serve thee; I consecrate to thee my whole soul that it may belong entirely to thee. Yes, henceforth I will do all that I can to please thee, and I will do everything that I know to be according to thy will, whatever pain it may cost me. O Jesus, my love, take possession wholly of me, and make me entirely thine."

Let us beseech our good Savior to heap his graces

* Imit., book iv. ch. viii. 1.

upon us. Ah ! let us not fear to ask too much of him : his treasures are infinite, and he is more anxious to make us partakers of them, than we can possibly be to desire them.

Let us beseech him urgently for the church, our institute, our relations, and our pupils. Let us pray to him for the poor souls in purgatory, for those especially for whom we offer up our communion. Let us pray to him for ourselves, beseeching him to unite us indissolubly to himself, to defend us against all the attacks of the enemy of our salvation, and to make us attain by the practice of Christian and religious virtues, to the happiness of possessing him in heaven, with Mary and the angels and saints.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, brightness of the Father, who art pleased to descend even to me, grant by thy grace that I may receive thee in a heart well disposed, and that I may render to thee, as far as possible, worthy homage of gratitude and love. Come, O adorable Host, that thy presence may sanctify my soul, and be my light, my strength, my life. Yes, come, O my divine Master ; and when thou shalt have come, I will say to thee : "Stay with me, and may nothing henceforth separate me from thee."

(SEE RÈSUMÈS, page 357.)

SIXTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

THANKSGIVING CONTINUED.

“The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever.”—Ps., lxxxviii. 2.

CONSIDERATION.

HOLY COMMUNION is an action so great, so sublime, so salutary that it ought to influence the whole of our lives.

It is not sufficient to make acts of adoration, love, thanksgiving, consecration, and petition, at the happy moment when we possess Jesus Christ; we should, as far as possible, continue our thanksgiving the rest of the day and even the day following, thinking on the signal favor that has been done to us, blessing Him to whom we are indebted for it, showing by our appearance, our actions, our words, that we appreciate the gift of God, and profit by it for our advancement.

We owe it to the greatness of the divine Guest who honors us by his presence. If a King of the earth came to visit the poorest of his subjects, to sit by his fireside, to converse with him, to press him with love to his heart, to overwhelm him with kindness, could he ever forget the distinction of which he had been the object? Would he not unceasingly talk about it? Now,

when we participate in the Holy Eucharist, are we not the object of a distinction infinitely more surprising ? Do we then often think of it, and cherish within us the sentiments which the visit of our divine Maker ought to excite in our hearts. Let us live by him and for him, acting through the influence of his spirit, and avoiding with care every thing that could displease him.

We owe it to our brethren and the faithful who see us approach to the holy table, and who have a right to expect from us special edification on communion days. They would be scandalised if, then especially,—we did not give forth in all our conduct the good odor of Jesus Christ, if we did not testify that, that divine Saviour lives in us, that the grace of his sacrament is not only barren in our souls, but that it there works its most abundant fruits.

Our dearest interests are engaged in it, Jesus passes into our heart doing good ; he makes us sharers in his heavenly riches ; by the contact with his divine flesh he gives a sweet perfume to our flesh ; he clothes us with his brightness, and transforms us into the resemblance of himself. He who carries a treasure walks with caution not to lose it ; he who has a precious perfume preserves it from the air ; he who is clothed in splendid raiment, keeps at a distance from all that could tear or soil it. Let us have the same prudence as the children of this world. . . Jesus Christ will recompense us by new graces, for he has said : He that hath, to him shall be given.*

* St. Matt., xiii. 12.

Let us not forget that we have to do with enemies who never sleep, who always entertain for us a jealous and insatiable hatred, and that they redouble their attacks to make us lose the fruits of our communions. The angel who by his pride and disobedience has lost God for ever, foams with rage because we possess that sovereign good. He sees the house clean and swept where he had dwelt, and he goes to bring seven other spirits of wickedness, with whom he comes for the purpose of taking from us our treasure, of expelling if possible the strong armed one who had conquered him.

Let us distrust his stratagems and with the help of grace make them turn to his shame. Let us persevere in the dispositions in which we were left by Our Lord Jesus Christ when he visited us. Let us carefully watch to preserve the Eucharistic bread from destroying insects.

The masters of a spiritual life recommend this earnestly: He, says the author of the *Imitation*,* who after communion gives himself up to exterior consolations, places himself thereby in very bad dispositions. “Beware of much talk, remain in secret and enjoy thy God for thou hast him whom the world cannot take from thee. I am he to whom thou oughtest to give thyself, so that thou mayest henceforth live without all solicitude, not in thyself but in me.”

St. Magdalen of Pazzi once asked a novice what her thoughts were employed on during communion;

* Book iv. ch. xii. 4.

the latter answered: "I thought on God's love." "It is well," answered the saint, "but it is not sufficient to think of it during communion, we must think of it always."

The saints, and in general all souls devoted to the Blessed Sacrament, strove to live more united to God more recollected than ordinary, on the days on which they had the happiness of communicating. St. Aloysius Gonzaga, for instance, devoted his whole attention to it: he divided the interval between each communion into two parts, employing one part in thanksgiving, and the other in preparation; and thus God in the holy Eucharist was the whole life of his soul.

Let us imitate those faithful servants of Jesus Christ, and living like them by the life of the God of love who became our food in this place of exile, we shall become worthy to behold him like them in our true country.

APPLICATION.

Let us think often on communion days on the favor we have received from the liberality of our Sovereign Master. Let us remember that he is still with us in spirit after the consummation of the sacred species, for He has said: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, obideth in me and I in him."*

No doubt, we should give to the duties of our employment all the attention they require, but can we not from time to time recall to mind the visit of our Saviour, adore him in us, and express our gratitude to

* St. John, vi. 57.

him? Very far from that being an obstacle to our work will it not on the contrary be to us a means of success, for acting in union with Jesus Christ, that divine Saviour will give his blessing to our labors, without which we should weary ourselves in vain, according to these words of the prophet: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." †

Let us watch particularly over ourselves, to avoid sin, flee the occasions of it, and resist with energy whatever could lead us into it. Let us remember that our body and soul have been united to the body and soul of Jesus Christ, that they have become holier, more sacred than the tabernacle, the ciborium, the chalice. . . . Could we dare to profane them, to deliver them up to the devil? Does not the very thought of that sacrilege fill us with horror? Let us then repel every temptation, saying within ourselves: I communicated this morning, I communicated yesterday; I belong wholly to Jesus who has given himself wholly to me, and I wish to be his forever.

"Let the thought of our partaking of the holy Eucharist, says St. Chrysostom, restrain us in impulses contrary to reason. . . . What would be our excuse if we sinned after having partaken of such food, if we became wolves after eating the divine Lamb?"

Let us avoid even the smallest faults. Let us show that we seek to please him who has enriched us with so many graces. As prudent servants, let us make the talents entrusted to us bear fruit. Jesus Christ is in

* Ps., cxxvi. 1.

us, to work out with our concurrence the work of our sanctification. Let us labor to this end with him, and correct all that is wanting in our conduct. Let us live by his life, and express his virtues in ourselves: his sweetness, his modesty, his charity, his humility, his obedience, &c.

Let us go, if possible, to visit him in his holy tabernacle, and there renew the sentiments of faith, confidence, love, and devotion in which we found ourselves at the moment of unspeakable happiness when he gave himself to us.

Happy are the souls that are faithful to these practices. They advance with great steps in the path of sanctity, whose end is eternal glory.

PRAYER.

O Saviour God who comest to reside in my soul, dwell there always. Reign over my heart and my senses. Grant by thy grace, that being fed on thee, I may live by thee and for thee, acting only through the influence of thy spirit, and seeking only to please thee, so that after having fulfilled thy will here below, I may be admitted to thy banquet in heaven. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 358.)

SIXTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

FERVENT COMMUNION.

“My heart hath been inflamed.”—Ps., lxxii. 21.

CONSIDERATION.

How much reason we have to excite in ourselves the most lively and affectionate piety ; when we propose to receive holy Communion.

“Let no one, says St Chrysostom, approach the holy table with unwillingness or fear, but let all be inflamed, fervent, and filled with confidence. While eating the paschal lamb, the Jews remained standing, with shoes on their feet, and staves in their hands, and they eat in haste : let us do what these things signify. The children of Israel were only going to the land promised them, but you, you are about to transfer your habitation to heaven.

How pure you ought to be ! with what spiritual fire you ought to burn ! think on the honor done you, and to what a table you are admitted. . . He whom the angels cannot gaze on because of the dazzling brightness of his beauty, is our food ; we unite with him, we become the same body and the same flesh with him.

Go to God with respect and modesty, and say when

you consider what is offered, "This is the divine body, by whose merits I shall not continue dust and ashes, which from a slave has made me free, by which I hope to obtain heaven and the riches of heaven; this body which Jesus has left to be our treasure and food, through an admirable effect of his love for us."

The holy Eucharist is the Sacrament of love; it is, says St Bernard, the love of loves; it is the throne of Charity: let us approach it then with love. Let us enter into the tabernacle, with a heart burning with the sacred fire of charity, piety, and fervor. Let us go to Jesus, as Jesus comes to us, desiring to please him and profit by his gifts, as he desires to sanctify us and enrich us by his presence.

What advantages shall we not derive from it? Let us hear him saying to us in the Fourth book of the Imitation: * "if a man does what lies in him, and is truly penitent as often as he shall come to me for pardon and grace, as I live, saith the Lord, who will not the death of the sinner but rather that he should be converted and live; I will no longer remember his sins but all shall be forgiven him."

The Christian who communicates with fervor unites himself to Jesus Christ with all the powers of his soul, strengthens that union, draws from it the graces of light, strength, and unction, which enlighten him on all that it is important for him to know, sustain and make him victorious in his warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil, raise his thoughts and senti-

* Ezek., xxviii.

ments towards heaven, and develop more and more in him sanctifying grace, and make him advance with rapid strides in the path of perfection.

The Christian who communicates with fervor obtains each time signal spiritual favors. Oh ! how could it be otherwise ? Is not Jesus Christ infinite goodness and the fulness of all good things ?

Let us recall too, with what tenderness he invites us to his sacred banquet : Let us hear him saying : " If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink,"[†] and let us understand that he makes it his happiness to enrich us with his graces. Let us then be a consolator to him ; let us give him by our good will, liberty to do good to us. Let us remember, moreover, that that good will put it in our power to taste the sweetness of the heavenly manna, and to be able to say with the prophet ? " Oh how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee,"* or with the author of the Imitation : " My heart will thrill with joy, when my soul shall be perfectly united to my God. Then he will say to me : I wish to be with you, if you wish to be with me ; and I will answer him : Deign, O Lord, to remain with me ; I have no other wish than to remain with thee : my whole desire is, that my heart may be perfectly united with thee."

The Christian who communicates with fervor shares in the sentiments of the saints, and says to our Lord with St. Liguori : " You are in me O my Jesus ; I hold thee in my embrace, I clasp thee to my heart. . . Oh !

* St. John, vii. 37.

† Ps., xxx. 20.

may I always love thee, and always be loved by thee. Yes, O my Redeemer, it shall be so I hope, and we shall love each other, O God of my heart, for time and eternity."

APPLICATION.

Let us not be disheartened, if we do not experience those affectionate sentiments, for a communion may be fervent; even very fervent, without being accompanied by interior consolations. How often the saints, in moments of trial, have failed to experience any sweet-ness in eating the bread of heaven. And yet, their souls were admirably disposed, and they communicated with the greatest profit. Fervor is not essentially a fact of sensibility, but of the will aided by grace; now that may be directed towards God without one having any sensible feeling of it.

Let us neglect nothing that our communions may be truly fervent and efficacious. Let us approach our Lord animated by good will and resolved to profit by the graces he brings us. Let us study to correct what is wanting in our souls; let us amend our ways; let everything in us be of a nature to please the God of love who visits us, and to make him lavish his gifts upon us.

Let us go to him in the same dispositions as his disciples went to meet him at his entrance into Jerusalem with souls filled with joy, bearing in our hands the palm branch of victory over sin, and the olive branch of our peace with God and our neighbor, acknowledging him

with lively faith as our Lord and our God, and proclaiming with every transport of love his greatness and loving perfections.

Let us beg of him the grace to receive him with a heart filled with the same piety as the saints, and let us say to him with the author of the Imitation : “It is in the power of thy mercy, O Jesus, to grant me that grace which I so ardently desire, to visit me with goodness, and inflame ~~me~~ with the spirit of fervor.”*

Let us for this purpose have recourse to the holy Virgin, begging that tender mother to obtain for us some share in the sentiments that filled her heart when she received in her chaste womb the word of God becoming incarnate through love for us.

Let us make our acts of preparation for holy communion as well as possible. Let us remember our faith ; let us humble ourselves profoundly at the thought of our nothingness, and at the remembrance of our sins ; let us inspire ourselves with an affectionate love towards the beloved one who visits us. Let us remember that it is a question of making our hearts a temple for God himself : let us then be wholly in earnest in this work.

Let us approach the holy table as if it were to be the last time of our lives. Let us go to Jesus Christ in his sacrament, as if it were to be the last time in our lives. Let us go to Jesus Christ, in his sacrament with the same dispositions, if possible, with which we should wish to go to him in heaven.

Doubtless all that requires, an effort ; but can we

* Imit., book iv. ch. xiv. 3.

hesitate to make it known that it is the Lord who comes to us, with the fulness of his blessings, and all the treasures of his heart; that a fervent communion is a rich spiritual harvest, a time of abundance able to anticipate a season of scarcity; that it is the source of the most numerous, most desirable graces, most capable of making us persevere to death in the narrow path of justice, whose end is the City of God.

PRAYER.

“O Jesus, whom I have so much desired, behold the hour for ever to be blessed, in which I shall receive thee into my soul. I came to thee, O most amiable Saviour with all the devotion of which I am capable. Ah! why have I not the purity of the angels, the charity of apostles, the sanctity of the confessors, the innocence and virtue of the virgins, the sentiments of adoration and love with which thy most holy mother was penetrated when she received thee at the time of thy Incarnation, and afterwards in the Holy Eucharist! Would that I had thy own divine heart to give thee a reception worthy of thyself.” *

Behold my wishes, O most sweet Jesus, and in thy goodness grant their fulfillment. Grant by thy grace, that I may receive thee as perfectly as you wish, so that thy coming to me may contribute to my sanctification, and make me attain to a union with thee in the kingdom of heaven.

(SEE RESUMES, page 359.)

* Prayers of St. Gertrude.

SIXTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

A tepid communion.

"They all eat the same spiritual food but with the most of them God was not well pleased."—1 Cor., x. 3, 5.

CONSIDERATION.

There is between the fervent communion which brings so many fruits of sanctification to the soul, and the sacrilegious communion which is the most hateful of crimes and the greatest of misfortunes, an extraordinary degree which is called the tepid communion, and on which it is important to make some considerations.

The tepid communion is that which is made with the absolutely requisite dispositions, but without the other dispositions which the greatness and dignity of the sacrament require.

The tepid communion is that of a soul which is, through its own fault, in a state of negligence and voluntary imperfections, which has little horror of mortal sin, which preserves an affection for venial sin, and commits it deliberately, which is not attentive and faithful in avoiding the occasions of offending God which makes no effort to correct its failings, which has

little desire for holy communion and would be glad if it could be deferred, so as not to be obliged to watch over itself, which approaches to the holy sacrament not through love for Jesus Christ nor the desire of profiting by his graces, but through custom, routine, or human motives.

Such a soul does not seriously prepare itself for communion; it is not profoundly recollected while making it, during thanksgiving it is in a state of deplorable languor, or suffers itself to be carried away by every kind of distraction.

It cannot however be said that it draws absolutely no fruit from holy communion, for the holy Eucharist always profits more or less every one who brings to the holy table the absolutely requisite dispositions; but it draws but little fruit, and it is to be feared that it will end by profaning the sacrament.

On that account, the saints and masters of a spiritual life have always dreaded a tepid communion, and have neglected nothing to make the souls so circumstanced fear it. How many motives they had for acting so!

A tepid communion argues little faith and little respect towards the adorable sacrament. Ah! how can we suppose a belief in the real presence of Jesus Christ and the conviction of his divinity in the soul that receives him with indifference, and with less care than it uses in receiving the visit of a superior, a friend, an equal. Cannot the divine Master say to him! “If I be a master, where is my fear?* what do you do to

* Mal., i. 6.

please me? How do you manifest your respect and adoration?"

A tepid communion argues little love for Jesus Christ, and it is particularly in that, that it grieves him. That divine Saviour instituted his sacrament to keep alive the fire of charity that he came to bring upon earth, and which he desires above everything else to see kindled and inflame the whole world. That fire is almost extinguished in the soul that communicates with tepidity, and there is only as it were a spark hidden under some ashes. Jesus Christ wishing to fan it by his vivifying breath, is hindered by the soul itself which does not sincerely wish to burn with the flames of divine love.

Oh! what a subject of pain for his divine heart thus to see the designs of his mercy ignored, and his desire to enrich us stricken with sterility!

A tepid communion paralyses the effect of the sacrament, and deprives us of the advantages and special graces which a fervent communion produces; it renders the visit of Jesus Christ as it were, useless. By it, he is as it were bound, enchain'd, reduced to an inability of doing us good. He wishes to sanctify us, and we do not really wish it; he comes to us with the treasure of his graces, and those treasures remain with him because we do not stretch forth a hand to receive them from his liberality. He is eager to see us rich, strong and happy, and he finds among us souls that are pleased with their poverty, their nakedness, their weakness, their infirmities, and their misery!

Alas! he cannot there, work a miracle, as among his

brethren at Nazareth and he brings elsewhere his graces and his merits, to scatter them in hearts that respond better to his love.

A tepid communion is the Eucharistic seed falling on rocky ground, or ground covered with thorns, and unable to rise and bring forth fruit.

Oh! How many Christians and religious there are in whom we remark no progress in spirituality, who are always the same, instead of becoming more and more detached from creatures, and united to God! Let them go to the cause of this, and will not a great number of them find that it is due to the reception of the holy Eucharist without the dispositions that are recommended?

Finally a tepid communion is full of dangers. It is written: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully.* Now to communicate worthily is evidently to participate in the work of the Lord, and the work of the Lord *par excellence*. That curse then affects those who approach with tepidity to the holy table. Have they not reason to fear that the Lord will reject them, as he makes us understand by these words of the Apocalypse: "I would thou wert cold or hot, but because thou art luke-warm and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth. †"

Does not experience too well demonstrate that the threat of the divine Master is fulfilled in many: how many have fallen from a tepid into a sacrilegious communion! Who would not tremble at the holy

* Jerem., xlvi. 10.

† Apoc., iii. 15, 16.

table with true fervor? Who wants not study to regulate himself according to these words of the Apostles; "We helping, do exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain?" ‡

APPLICATION.

Let us dread tepid communions and neglect nothing to avert or avoid these. Still, let it not be by keeping away from the Eucharistic table, for that would be to fall into another abyss deeper and more fatal: we must communicate, but we must do it well.

If we love Jesus Christ, if we understand our own spiritual interests, let us always be careful in preparing to partake of the divine banquet.

Let us excite in ourselves the desire of communicating, for, says St. Augustine, "that heavenly food requires a hungry heart." Let us renew our sentiments of faith, piety, and love. Let us have a special intention for each of our communions. Let us protest to our divine Saviour that we receive him out of obedience to him, to satisfy the desires of his heart to find in our union with him the light and strength of which our soul stands in need.

Let us go to him with the firm resolution of correcting our faults by his grace, and let us correct them in fact. Let us be, as communion draws near and after having made it, more charitable, more humble, more courageous in our warfare against the world and the flesh. Then we shall be able to give ourselves the consoling testimony that we are in a state of fervor.

* 2. Cor., vi. 1.

Let us be faithful in rendering to ourselves an account on the evening previous to communion of the fruits of the last communion, and occasionally let us make them known to our spiritual director. From time to time let us communicate with the view of repairing what was wanting in our past communions : viz. that is a truly profitable practice which gives joy to the heart of Jesus, appeases the justice of his heavenly Father, kindles and keeps alive our devotion, and draws upon us the most abundant blessings.

PRAYER.

O Jesus who in thy charity hast instituted thy sacrament and commanded me to receive it, so as to attain through it life and glory, be thou blessed for thus calling the poor and the needy to the communion of thy most holy body, and deign O sweet Saviour to supply by thy goodness and grace whatever is wanting in me for receiving thee worthily.

“ May the reception of thy body, O Lord Jesus, not turn to our judgment and condemnation ; but by thy goodness, may it serve to be the salvation of our souls and bodies, and the remedy for all our evils. That is what we ask of thee, of thee who livest and reignest with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost for ever and ever. Amen ” *

(SEE RESUMES, page 359.)

* Liturgy.

SIXTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

A SACRILEGIOUS COMMUNION.

“He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.”—1 Cor., xi. 29.

CONSIDERATION.

WHAT a crime, and what a misfortune is a sacrilegious communion, that is to say the reception of the body of Jesus Christ by a soul that knows itself to be in mortal sin !

It is the profanation of that which is most august, most holy, most sacred ; it is the greatest of favors dis-honored and made an occasion of a most grievous offence to a benefactor ; it is the loveliest the most excel-lent of God’s works contradicted, turned from its end, and ruined by a wretch ; it is the act which most pro-foundly afflicts pious souls and which constitutes the most complete triumph of the prince of darkness, that evil spirit who seeks to destroy what Jesus Christ has built up ; it is a crime so odious that the good Christian is unwilling to admit the thought that there can be a human being bad enough who dares commit it.

A sacrilegious communion is a most audacious out-

rage on the adorable person of Jesus Christ, for by it that divine body formed from the purest blood of the most holy Virgin Mary, and which is the worthy object of the most profound veneration of men and angels is placed on impure lips, received into a polluted heart, and cast at the feet of satan who triumphs over his victory.

Infinite holiness is forcibly united to corruption : Oh ! what pain to the heart of Jesus, and who can imagine it. Among the punishments which the cruelty of man has invented, the most frightful is said to be that of uniting a living body to a corpse, breast to breast, and mouth to mouth. Now, is not that what the unworthy communicant makes Jesus suffer, since he unites him in the closest way to his soul in mortal sin, which in the eyes of the thrice holy God is more horrible than a corpse in a state of decomposition can be to us ?

A sacrilegious communion is a renewal of the passion of our Saviour and the deicide of the Jews. In fact, the unworthy communicant crucifies anew Jesus Christ in his heart : he fastens him to the Cross, he delivers him up to the derision of the devil and his angels, he insolently tramples on the adorable blood which was spilt for the redemption of the world.

He is another Judas joining perfidy to treason, betraying his divine Master to his enemies, and betraying him by a kiss. To him also Jesus repeats these words of charity and sweetness ; “Friend whereto art thou come ?”* “Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss ?”†

* St. Matt., xxvi. 50.

† St. Luke, xxii. 48.

All the doctors of the church speak with abhorrence of a sacrilegious communion, and strive to inspire the most intense horror for it in the minds of the faithful.

St. Paul tells us that he who eateth this bread and drinketh this wine unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. St. Cyprian places the unworthy communicant in the rank of idolaters, saying that he profanes the temple of the Holy Ghost, destroys the sanctuary, partakes at the same time of the cup of Jesus Christ and that of the devil. St. Chrysostom compares him to the Jews who crucified our Lord, to Herod who wished to destroy the divine Infant pretending that he wished to adore him. St. Augustine says that the cross of Calvary was less painful than that to which he is fastened in a soul guilty of mortal sin. St. Catherine of Sienna calls those who dare to commit a sacrilegious communion, incarnate demons, tabernacles of Satan.

Yes, it is a crime whose blackness human language cannot express, and which entails the most terrible chastisements. Let us recall to mind the parable of the Nuptial Supper, related in the Gospel: the king enters into the hall where the guests are assembled, and he sees there one who had not on a wedding garment; then he said to the waiters: "having bound his hands and feet, cast him out into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

The Holy Ghost says by his apostle: "let man prove

* St. Matt., xxii. 13,

himself, and then let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup, for he who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself." "Therefore there are among you many weak and languishing, and many who sleep the sleep of death." † What can be imagined more terrible! O sacrilegious wretches listen to the Lord who says to you: "The voice of the blood of my son cries to me." In you are fulfilled these words of the royal prophet: "He loved cursing, and it shall come unto him . . . and it went in like water into his entrails, and like oil in his bones." ‡

No, we cannot deplore as it deserves the fate of sacrilegious Communicants. The devil rules them as he ruled Judas. A thick cloud spreads over their understanding. They are in a state of blindness that increases from day to day. Their passions have all power over their will which seems already confirmed in evil. They fall from precipice to precipice; they heap crime upon crime, and thus come to final impenitence.

There are no sinners, says the doctors of the Church, who become so hardened as those who make a bad use of holy communion. One sacrilege brings with it the most frightful remorse; but after many, the profaner of this greatest of God's gifts, experiences nothing: all about him is, if we may say so, marked with the seal of reprobation. "The good and the wicked, says the Church, receive equally the body of Jesus Christ: but how different is their lot! to the former it is life, to the latter it is death." *

* 1 Cor., xi. 28, 30. † Ps., cviii. 18. ‡ From the *Lauda Sion*.

APPLICATION.

While meditating on the crime of a sacrilegious communion, on that which is such a just cause of terror and tears, let us firmly resolve to avoid with the greatest care everything that could commit us to a course ending in that abyss. Let us prove ourselves before approaching to the holy table; let us give ourselves an account of the state of our conscience: let us not fall into scruples, but at the same time let us not deceive ourselves. Let us excite in our hearts a true repentance for our sins; let us be candor itself in confession, making ourselves known exactly as we know ourselves after a careful examination.

Let us neglect nothing that true zeal may suggest, to make our pupils escape the calamity of a sacrilegious communion. But let us take care not to inspire them with that sentiment which may be called, fear of God, leading them to flee from the holy table from an ill grounded fear of committing a sacrilege in approaching it: that would be to fall from one evil into another no less fatal. Let us be careful not to deprive those of all confidence who may have been guilty of a sacrilegious communion: Jesus Christ who called Judas by the name of friend is always ready to restore them to his love. Let them have recourse to the priest and confess with sincerity and contrition, and the divine blood which is not for them a curse will become again a saving stream to purify them, and give them all the beauty of innocence.

At the thought of the guilt of bad communions, let us weep bitterly over the ingratitude of men, and let us offer to Jesus Christ in compensation the homage of all pious souls, that of the angels and saints, and in particular of his holy mother.

Let us offer to him our expressions of regret; let us assist at holy mass, visit him in his tabernacle, and above all receive him with a view to repair the outrages offered to him in his adorable sacrament. Nothing consoles his heart like a communion of reparation received with true piety; nothing is more calculated to turn aside the scourges of divine justice irritated by sacrilegious communions, and to draw down upon earth the most abundant blessings of heaven.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, who will give to my eyes a fountain of tears that I may bewail the outrages you receive in your sacrament of love? Would that I could attone for them by my blood! Ah! deign to repair them yourself, by kindling in the faithful the most lively devotion towards you. Grant by your grace that we may receive you with purity, fervor, and love, and that we may be to your heart a greater source of joy, than their ingratitude who communicate unworthily is to you a subject of grief.

(see RÉSUMÉS, page 359.)

SIXTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

HOLY VIATICUM.

“Lord stay with us, because it is towards evening.”—St. Luke.
xxiv. 29.

CONSIDERATION.

MAN at the approach of his last hour, is generally a prey to cruel thoughts and gloomy anticipations. His sufferings make him sad, uneasy, miserable. He sees before him the approaching end of the career he had to run on earth, and he regrets that he must leave it. Before him there arises an unknown world, at whose entrance he beholds the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge. His conscience is agitated, and shows him, as if in a single picture, all the iniquities of his life. The devil makes the most violent assaults upon him, and endeavors to ensnare him either with a fatal presumption or a blind security, or on the other hand to distrust of the divine mercy and despair. How much need he has to be strengthed, enlightened, and consoled! Therefore the church offers him all her succors, making it a strict obligation upon him to accept them. The priest comes to hear his confession, and to pronounce over him the sentence of pardon which God ratifies in heaven. Afterwards he brings him the holy viaticum, and by the sacrament of Extreme Unction completes

the work of his purification and rendering him worthy to be admitted to heaven. Oh ! how precious and salutary is that aid of the church which gives us at that last moment the good that contains all good ! Wonderful mystery of the love of Jesus Christ for us ! That good Saviour visits us when all our earthly friends bid us adieu. He alone remains with us, and he alone satisfies all the cravings of our heart. What a consolation he brings us ! His presence changes our tears of sadness into tears of joy, and from his heart there is diffused into our soul a divine unction that sweetens all our sorrows. How many there are who have experienced it and who consequently could say with Father Suarez : “I did not think it was so sweet to die.”

Jesus who is the consoler of the dying Christian is his guide, his viaticum to lead him from this land of misery to our true country.

Yes, when we are told that we must leave this world to go to the next, where nothing of what belongs to earth can follow us, when disquietude takes possession of us as not knowing how to make that passage ; the Lord who formerly sent the angel Raphael to young Tobias, comes himself to guide our steps and preserve us from the danger into which we run. He leaves the prison where his love for man confines him, and visiting us on our bed of agony says to us : “I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God.* Let your heart not be disquieted. Abide in me. Where I am, I wish that my servant should also be.”

* St. John, xx. 17,

Let us comprehend these words, and redouble all our confidence. It is Jesus who leads us to heaven: Ah! how could we fear not reaching it? Is not heaven the house of his Father to which he has the past access? Is it not his inheritance, his kingdom, his city? Is it not that land of happiness which he conquered by his victory over hell, and the entrance to which he has opened to us by his sufferings and death upon the cross?

He fortifies us beforehand against the horror we have at the approaching dissolution of our body. He gives us his body risen from the grave, and thereby places in us the principle of our future resurrection.

Let death come; it will not be able to complete its work. Something of us will resist its assaults, and on the great day when its empire will end, that germ will suddenly develop itself; we shall return to life, but to a life perfected, the divine life of Him who said: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

No! No! the last agony has no horrors, death has nothing to terrify the Christian fortified by the body of Jesus Christ. He can exclaim: "I found him whom my soul loveth, I held him, and I will not let him go."† What matters it that the light of this world leaves me, since He who is the eternal light shows himself to the eyes of my soul! What matters it that I must separate from everything since I have in me he who is everything!

* St. John, vi. 55.

† Cant., iii. 4.

Souls devoted to the Holy Eucharist experience these sentiments, and exclaim with the pious virgin Marie Gustelle: "How great is my happiness ! Jesus is not satisfied with leaving his tabernacle : his love has made him cross the porch of his blessed temple where he has made me pass such happy days. He has come under my roof and has annihilated himself in the poor recesses of my heart. And now I am filled with the hope of being perpetually united to him, of possessing him for ever. O heavenly spouse dear friend of my heart, yes I love thee and I wish to die for thee."

The faithful whom Jesus visits in their last moments, need not fear the assaults of Satan, for they have reason to say with the Apostle: "If God be for us, who is against us?"‡ and they hear their sweet Master reassure them and say: "Fear not for I am with thee."§

If the sight of the sins they have committed makes them dread the scourges of divine justice, they reanimate their confidence with the thought that they are purged with the blood of the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, that blood which keeps away the destroying angel and solicits and obtains graces for us. Jesus says to them: "have courage, your sins are forgiven you,"* and in giving myself to you, I give you a pledge that I shall pronounce over you only the sentence of mercy, that opens to my servants the gates of the kingdom I have prepared for them.

They see themselves on the point of appearing before God, but they have with them the Son of God:

* Rom., vii. 31. † Isa., xliii. 5. ‡ St. Matt., ix. 2.

why now should they not have the most firm hope ? It is related that Themistocles when exiled and reduced to seek an asylum in the territory of a king against whom he had fought, took in his arms the son of that king and then presented himself to ask pardon and hospitality, and it is added that his prayer was heard. But is it not with the son of God in their arms that the faithful, fortified with the holy viaticum, go to present themselves before God ? What have they to fear and how could death appear to them anything but a sleep in hope ?

No, they have no reason to be afraid, for the holy Eucharist has all the virtue of the cross by which death and hell were vanquished. Has it not rendered the martyrs not only superior to the fear of death, but desirous and eager to shed their blood for the faith ? It can then place us, as in fact it does place us, above the terrors of death, and makes us say : “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear ;”† “in peace. . . I will sleep for thee, O Lord, singularly hast thou settled me in hope.”‡

APPLICATION.

Let us more and more admire the religion that has a remedy for all our sorrows, and which by the sacrament of the body of Jesus Christ, sweetens the agonies of our last hour, and makes us find in those final sufferings a taste of the joys of heaven.

Let us appreciate the happiness of receiving the holy Viaticum, and let us pray that we may have the

* Ps., xxvi. 1.

† *Ibid.*, iv. 9, 10.

grace to receive it. Let us beg God to grant the same favor to all who are dear to us, and on our side let us contribute all in our power to procure it for them. We say that we love them: let us show it by procuring for them by our prayers and if necessary by our actions the only favor that a soul about to leave this world asks of us.

Let us form the resolution of begging the last succors of religion for ourselves as soon as we have been made conscious that we are in danger of death.

Let us thank our Lord for wishing to become our guide to lead us from a land of exile to our true country. He came to us on the day of our first communion to make us walk on the narrow path, and frequently since to keep us there; and he comes again to us at the end of life to complete his work and introduce us to the land of everlasting happiness.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, my consolation and my hope, I adore the will of thy Father, and I accept death as to the time and circumstances he may have ordained. But, I beseech thee, grant that I may receive the Viaticum of thy sacred body. May thy sweet light, O Eucharistic sun, come to gladden my dying eyes. May I feel O Jesus your heart respond to the last palpitations of mine. Oh grant by thy infinite goodness that my soul already lost in thy divine soul, may pass from time to eternity in the sweetness of that last embrace.

(see RÉSUMÉS, page 360.)

SIXTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

CEREMONIES ACCOMPANYING THE HOLY VIATICUM.

"Behold the bridegroom cometh."—St. Matt., xxv. 6.

CONSIDERATION.

Let us contemplate what takes place at the reception of the holy viaticum, and let us make the reflections which our faith suggests on a subject so great, so impressive, so useful as a meditation.

Let us represent to ourselves one of our brothers in danger of death. He is told that his case is serious, that it would be prudent on his part to receive the last succors of the Church; or rather he has asked them himself as soon as he is made conscious of his situation.

The confessor has come to hear his confession and pronounce absolution over him; the tribunal of mercy has been erected within sight of the tribunal of eternal justice, to prevent its severities; finally the minister of God notifies the sick man to prepare for holy communion, and has mentioned to him the hour at which it would be given.

Left alone for some space of time the dying man pre-

pares to receive his God. He rekindles all his faith, all his hope, and all his love.

Let us listen to him, as he thus addresses himself: "I am told that my Jesus the beloved of my soul is about to visit me on this bed of suffering, which I shall leave only to enter on another life. . . He is coming to me, that God of mercy, that good Jesus to whom I have consecrated my existence. He wishes in his ineffable love to console, strengthen, and give joy to his child already over-shadowed by the gloom of the grave. I used to long for the day that was to unite me to my Saviour. Now he comes to me in this hour of love. He comes to rest in my heart for the last time: . . O Jesus, it is for you alone this heart beats; its last throbs are for you alone, for you alone are all that I love.

Come, O my light, my support, my consolation, my guide; scatter the darkness of my mind, show me the way that will lead me to heaven, and make me follow it. Come, O bread of life, O inestimable pledge of charity, Come to take me with you to heaven, whither will the desires of my heart have gone before me.

But the time fixed for the ceremony has arrived. The community joined by some religious friends is gathered round the foot of the altar. The priest opens the tabernacle, takes forth the adorable host, and blesses the assembly. He then leaves the Church preceded and followed by persons bearing lighted candles and answering the prayers he addresses to God.

The dying man has seen everything got ready in his chamber that is required under the circumstances. He

is profoundly recollected, and has made repeated acts of adoration, love, and desire. . . . The tinkling of the little bell tells him of the approach of the King of Kings. Then he summons up all the strength left him. His countenance brightens, his eyes sparkle with a sweet light in them, and tears of emotion begin to drop upon his cheeks: his heart casts itself at the feet of his beloved.

The religious procession enters his chamber, the priest says: "peace be upon this house," the assistants answer: "and on all those who dwell in it." Yes, peace be upon that house which possesses the Lord! peace upon those who inhabit it! peace on that sufferer, on that soul which the devil is seeking to disquiet and trouble, to cast down into fear and despondency! . . . The wish expressed is realized, for Jesus the prince of peace repeats the same words as his master and brings about the result they signify.

The priest makes a short exhortation to the sufferer, and completes the work of his preparation for holy communion. Then taking the sacred host in his hands, while holding it up, he says: Behold the Lamb of God; behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world.

How consoling are these words. You fear Jesus who will be your judge; but look on him, O my brother, as a lamb for it is by that name he wishes to be called. If the thought of your sins makes you tremble, remember that he is the victim, who hast taken our iniquities upon himself. Courage then! He who comes to you with so much sweetness will always be gentle towards

you, and he will love you more when your combats are over than now when you are engaged in them.

Conqueror of death, he comes to complete in you his victory over it, by placing in your body the germ of immortality. He wishes to lead you to heaven and he gives you a pledge of it. He becomes your guide your defence, your support. What reason you have to bless him, hope in him, and love him! He gives himself to you beneath the sacramental veils, to prepare you for beholding him face to face in heaven.

"Receive, O my brother," says the priest, "this viaticum of the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, may it defend you against the spirits of evil, and lead you to eternal life. Amen."

Then the sick man partakes of that heavenly food. He adores in his heart the God who dwells there, and he expresses to him his love, his gratitude, and his submission to his holy will.

The ceremony being over, the religious processions leaves, each one looking an adieu to the sick man, in the original meaning of the word: "To God I leave you until the day when we shall see each other again in God."

Ah! what then takes place in his soul when he is left alone with Jesus! Divine love inflames his heart; the fear of death gives place to a magnanimous resignation; he feels himself strong enough to vanquish his pains and resist the enemies of his salvation; he fears neither death nor its consequences, because faith tells him that he bears within him the seed of immortality, and that

he will have his best friend as his judge. He regrets nothing of what he must leave; all his attachment to creatures is severed at once; his soul dwells already, through hope, in the mansions of heaven, and he repeats the song of the aged Simeon: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace, because my eyes have seen thy salvation, because I possess Him who is a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of the people of Israel." *

APPLICATION.

As part of our meditation this day let us earnestly ask of our Lord that we may not be deprived of the last succors of religion. Let us beg him to come to us when we shall approach the end of our career, and to bring us to the city of happiness.

Let us bless him for having become our viaticum in the voyage of eternity. Let us extol his infinite goodness which brings him down even to us. A king who visits one of his subjects when sick is justly praised, and shall we not admire the King of Kings who comes to us wretched sinners, and enriches us with his treasures when every one abandons us.

Let us instruct our pupils well in their duties regarding the last aids of religion, both in reference to themselves and their relations. Let us warn them against the prejudices of this world, and especially against that cruel compassion which waits till the patient is in extremities before procuring him the aid of religion,

* St. Luke, ii. 29, 30. 32.

and which often, alas ! calls in the priést when it is too late,

Not to be so deprived of them ourselves, let us resolve to ask for the last sacraments as soon as we shall perceive that we are in danger, and let us once a month receive holy communion by way of viaticum.

The day of our last communion will soon come. Let us hasten to prepare ourselves for it. For this purpose let us redouble our prayers, and embrace the practice of virtue with courage and fidelity and let us rekindle our piety in approaching the holy table so that in each communion, as well as the last : “The body of Jesus Christ may defend our soul from the malice of the enemy, and lead us to eternal life.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, light of the world, consolator of the afflicted, support of the weak, charitable guide ; come to me who have the greatest need of your help. Defend me against the enemies of my salvation ; “Show, O Lord, thy ways to me, and teach me thy paths,”* be my viaticum to lead me to the mansions where your elect, beholding you face to face, enjoy the fulness of everlasting happiness which is the object of all my hopes.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 360.)

* Ps., xxiv. 4.

SIXTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

COMMUNION RECEIVED AS IF A VIATICUM.

“Lord into thy hands I commend my spirit.”—Ps., xxx. 6.

CONSIDERATION.

THE masters of a spiritual life recommend the receiving of communion from time to time as if in viaticum, that is to say, putting ourselves as much as possible in the dispositions in which we shall wish to be found when on the bed of death, filling ourselves with the thoughts and feelings which will then probably take possession of our souls, and producing acts of submission to the will of God, acceptance of death, detachment from creatures, as if the hour had come to leave this place of exile for our true country.

It is a pious practice which cannot be too much recommended because of the fruits of sanctification it produces.

The last communion of our life is evidently the most important, the most decisive for salvation, of which it is what we may call an immediate pledge. It requires then the most serious preparation, but ordinarily speaking such a preparation, is very difficult for sick persons, who supposing even the free use of their

faculties, are always more or less absorbed by their sufferings, inclined to concern themselves only with their physical state, and very little with God and the things of God.

How much of this is seen even in those who though very good people can scarcely breathe a prayer on their death beds ! What assurance have we that that will not be our case ? And how can we then make a suitable preparation to receive the visit of the God of the holy Eucharist ? It is both prudent and wise to make, such preparation now. Communion received as if in viaticum is the true means to do so. It excites in the soul all the feelings of one who piously prepares himself to receive for the last time the God who is his shepherd and his Father, and who in a short time will be his judge and his recompense : and these sentiments remain in us to be developed when the proper time arrives. This is a remote preparation which facilitates the immediate preparation, and which to a certain extent can supply it.

Communion received as if in viaticum makes us already participate in the fruits of the last sacraments. Oh ! how dear it ought to be to us when viewed in that light ! Death surprises the greatest number of its victims, and it may surprise us. How often religious expire without having been able to obtain the last succors of thy Church ! We have no certainty that it may not be our case. But if we have frequently communicated as if in viaticum during the course of life we shall have in that case to a considerable degree the grace of

Viaticum properly so called. Our Lord will be with us to guide us in the passage from time to eternity to take our soul, when it leaves the body, and place it in the hands of his Eternal Father, covered with his merits and worthy to participate in his inheritance.

Let us remember moreover that death may strike us immediately; that it is possible the communion we are going to make may be our last; and in that case, it would be to us in the truest sense our viaticum, that which should complete our preparation to appear before God. Let us then approach to the holy table with a view to satisfy for all the sins of our life, and to ask of our Lord the inestimable favor of dying in his holy love.

Besides, communion received as if in viaticum is singularly calculated to redouble our fervor, and to awaken in our souls all the sentiments that are of a nature to make us draw fruits from the sacrament.

While considering our death as near, while assisting in thought at that last hour on which our eternity will depend, our faith grows more lively; our fear of God and horror of sin becomes more profound; the world and its vanities appear to us in a more contemptible light; our heart becomes inflamed with the fire of purer love for Jesus Christ, while there are awakened in it the most ardent desires for heaven; we place ourselves by the grace of God in better dispositions to profit by the visit of our Saviour.

What can be conceived more calculated to awaken our devotion than to say to ourselves: my career here

below is coming to an end. In a little while death will leave me at the feet of the sovereign judge. What sentence will he pronounce? . . . Ah! I am seized with terror, for sins found a dwelling place in me. . . But why should I lose courage? He who is to be my judge comes to me full of sweetness: will he not be all sweetness when my soul shall go to him after leaving this body of sin in which it is confined?

I am about to die and experience the corruption of the tomb; but first I shall unite myself to him who is the resurrection and the life, and by whom I shall come forth from the grave, where I shall leave only my mortality. I can then repeat with the royal prophet: "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadows of death, I fear no evils, for thou art with me"**

I am going to communicate; I am going to receive the adorable host with which I shall present myself at the gate of heaven. O Jesus, come and place yourself as a seal upon my heart. Let your body, be my food my remedy, and my viaticum to go to your Father, who is also my Father; and through you may I find access to the heavenly Sion which is the object of all my hopes and desires.

Ah! how could a soul that entertained such thoughts fail to communicate with more lively fervor and more affectionate piety? How could it fail to partake with the greatest advantage at the holy table, where it receives nourishment for eternal life?

* Ps., xxii. 4.

APPLICATION.

Let us prepare to receive the holy sacrament by placing ourselves in the dispositions we have been meditating on and which are so profitable.

Let us imagine ourselves on the bed of suffering, our soul absorbed in grief, weighed down by the remembrance of its sins, troubled and anxious at the sight of the eternity it is about to enter, harassed by the devil, crushed and dispirited, asking who will console it, or rather asking for the adorable sacrament which at such a time is our only consolation.

Let us represent to ourselves the preparations made for the administration of the last succors of religion, and let us make in preparation for communion the same acts as in a preparation for the holy viaticum.

Let us say to our Lord : I am going to receive you at your holy table, as if it were for the last time of my life. I intend to do, by your grace, what I should do if I were on the bed of death.

I offer to your Father, in union with you on Mount Calvary, the sacrifice of my life. I wish to die to obey him, to adore him, to satisfy his justice, to be more like to you. . . What a favor you do me, O my Savior, in giving me yourself in viaticum, in coming to me as a precious pledge of the life of happiness you have promised and merited for us, and of which you yourself give us possession. Come, O my Lord, teach me to die well, so that I may live eternally with thee in heaven.

Let us then receive Jesus Christ into our hearts and adore him there with the most profound piety as our Saviour and also as our judge. Let us beg him to sanctify us by his presence, and to make us worthy to hear him pronounce over us after death, the sentence of everlasting happiness.

PRAYER.

My life is advancing rapidly to its close. My days disappear like smoke, or glide by like the waters of a stream, whose course nothing can check. Soon they will pass by where I was , and find that I am gone. They will say : here was his room, here was his bed, but he is no longer among the living.

No, I shall belong no longer to this world, but to thine O my Jesus. I shall be with thee in that land where the inhabitants know no more of death, and through thee I shall enjoy the sovereign happiness which is their inheritance.

Yes, such is my hope. . . Oh, grant that it may be fulfilled, and give me a pledge thereof in the adorable sacrament of which I am about to participate I ask it of thee in the name of thy most holy Mother, and by all thou hast done and suffered for my salvation.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 356.)

SIXTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

THE RELIGIOUS PREPARING HIMSELF FOR HOLY VIATICUM.*

“Lord he whom thou lovest is sick.”—St. John, xi. 3.

CONSIDERATION.

If it is important to prepare well for holy communion, it is especially so when it is for communion in form of viaticum; for it can supply all that was wanting, and complete what was good in all that went before, and it is the source of the most necessary and most efficacious graces.

Doubtless that preparation is difficult under suffering, but it is therefore more meritorious, I am going then, by God’s help, to make it as well as possible.

An Act of Faith.

I have been told that Jesus my beloved is coming to visit me on my bed of sickness: Soon he will be here

* We give in this and the following meditation some acts both for preparation for holy viaticum, and thanksgiving, which we have arranged according to the method made use of in our institute. The sick person may either read them or have them read to him in whole or in part according to his condition, at some suitable opportunity.

and on entering he will say to me by the mouth of his minister : " Peace be on this house, and all those who dwell in it." What an honor he does me ! This room, and afterwards this body, will be his temple. I am going to be united to my God, and sanctified by his presence.

An Act of Adoration.

My Lord comes to me. How can I receive him with the respect he deserves ? They are going to ornament this chamber which for a moment or two will be his sanctuary ; with still more reason should I seek to adorn my heart where he is going to make his dwelling place forever.

O King of heaven, sovereign Lord of all things, I acknowledge thee as the supreme Master of life and death, of time and eternity. Come from thee, I return to thee, and I return by thee who are the beginning, middle, and end of all that fulfils its destiny. Deign to accept my adorations ; I offer them in union with those of the angels who surround thy tabernacle, and who will compose thy royal court in the visit thou art about to pay me.

An Act of Thanksgiving.

How many benefits I have received from thee in the course of my life, O my divine Saviour, and what reason I have to bless thee ! Thou hast favored me with graces without number, and especially with that of my religious vocation and perseverance in my holy state. I have then every reason to exclaim ; " The lines are

fallen upon me in goodly places."* Oh ! thanks for all thy goodness towards me. Thanks for the favor thou hast done me this day. Soon I shall receive thee O divine Host, O heavenly bread which hast been and still art all my joy, all my strength, all my consolation ! How good thou art O loving Father, who permittest thy sick child to rest his head upon thy breast, and who they givest him to experience on his bed of suffering the happiness the beloved disciple tasted of at the last supper! Be thou blessed, O charitable Master, who comest to dry my tears, to encourage me, to strengthen me, to speak to my heart words of confidence, and thus to partly open before my eyes the gate of heaven which, I hope, will soon be opened to receive me.

Act of Humility.

How much reason I have to extol thy goodness ! For what am I in thy sight but misery and nothingness, dust ? that returns to dust. . . And yet, O sovereign King, thou deignest to honor me by coming to me ! Thou art going to unite thyself to me who am unworthy to lift up mine eyes to thee.

Acts of Shame and Contrition.

What am I but a sinner ? And how many offences against thee, O my God, meet my eyes when I consider the whole course of my life ! Like the holy King Ezechias I repass in the bitterness of my heart the years I have lived, and I exclaim with the royal

* Ps., xv. 6.

prophet: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my iniquities.*

Your minister has pronounced over me the words of absolution, complete what he has begun, so that at thy coming my soul may be free from every stain, and as far as possible worthy to receive thee.

Act of Importunity.

I know that my prayer does not deserve to be heard, but I remember O Jesus thy sufferings and death and I open my heart to the most entire confidence. Thy merits are infinite; my hope can then be unlimited . . . Yes, I hope in thee, O Saviour of my soul, and it is with these sentiments that I beg thee to give me fervor, charity, humility, all the virtues that can be agreeable in thine eyes, and to make one draw great advantages from thy visit. I offer thee, for this purpose, thine own merits as well as those of Mary, Joseph, and all the angels and saints.

I keep thy image to prepare myself for the kiss of love thou art about to give me, and I thank thee, for thou dost not come to me but to heaven to conduct me to where thou art, and where thou wishest me to be with thee.

Yes, I shall enter into the city of happiness: thou givest me the pledge thereof in giving me thyself. Yes, I shall enter into the house of the Lord there to sing his praises forever.

* Ps., 4. 3.

Act of Union.

My beloved comes to me. Go before him, O my soul, in desire. Have no thought, no feeling but for him. O my heart, be thou consumed with the fire of his love.

Oh ! why should I not love thee as much as I can love, O heavenly Friend who comest to console me, to encourage, strengthen, and enrich thy sick servant ? All my affections, O Jesus, are thine ; thine, every throb of my heart until its last !

That my union with thee may be entire, I must renounce everything, for I hear you say to me : "Offer yourself to one with all that you are, as I offered myself for you upon the cross, and your oblation will be perfect" * Oh ! willingly, O Lord, do I renounce everything and myself to have no thought, wish, or action but for thee ; willingly do I make to thee the sacrifice of my life in union with that which you made of thine upon the cross.

Besides, did I not know that my life was only lent to me, and that I should have to return it ? Since the moment approaches when I must acquit myself of that debt, may thy will be done. Why should I regret quitting a world which man passes through, bathing it with his sweat and tears, and where he is always in danger of falling into the abyss of sin ?

All happiness is in union with thee ; behold now the moment when I can unite myself to thee by the Eucharistic union, and afterwards by an eternal union.

* Imit., book iv. ch. viii. 2.

Act of Invocation and Petition.

Come, O source of happiness, come, O life-giving bread: my soul burns with the desire to receive thee.

O sacred viaticum, O heavenly food my only good, give thyself to me, and make me find in thee the strength and courage to support all my sufferings patiently and to resist all the temptations of the devil. Come, O adorable Host, place thyself on my heart like the divine seal which will make me known as the servant of the Most High, and will give me free entrance into heaven.

PRAYER.

Most holy Virgin, my good and loving Mother, St. Joseph my all powerful protector, my good angel and all ye saints who interest yourselves so much in my salvation, assist me I beseech you and obtain for me by thy intercession the grace of receiving in the best dispositions the viaticum of the body of Jesus my Saviour and my hope, so that this succor which the Church offers me may preserve me from the malice of my enemies and keep my soul for eternal life.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 361.)

SIXTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

THANKSGIVING AFTER VIATICUM.

“Blessed be the Lord, for he hath shewn his wonderful mercy to me in a fortified city.”—Ps., xxx. 22.

CONSIDERATION.

BEHOLD the most important and most precious of all the moments of life. Happy the sick man who then does all in his power to excite and keep alive his fervor and piety. One means is presented to him in our ordinary method of prayer. It is sufficient if he makes the acts thereof applying them to the holy viaticum; he will thus make a thanksgiving singularly profitable to his soul.

Act of Faith.

It is thou, O divine Jesus, O King of glory and Son of the Eternal Father, who dwellest in the midst of me, in my heart, on my breast. What a subject of astonishment! I am the temple of God! O Lord, to what a depth thou hast lowered thyself! Thou wishest to make one with thy sick servant, and thou hast given him thy body, thy blood, thy soul, thy divinity, all that thou art.

An Act of Adoration.

Receive, O my God, my profound adorations. In union with thy most holy Mother, St. Joseph, my good angel, and all my holy patrons and protectors, I acknowledge thee as my Sovereign Lord, as the absolute Master of all things. I offer thee as an homage of my entire dependence, all my life and especially the moment that must end it. Oh! grant that I may die adoring and blessing thee.

Act of Thanksgiving.

What a signal favor has been granted me! Be blessed for that, O Jesus, as well as for all those favors thou hast hitherto granted me, and for those thou hast still in store for me. It was said to thee: "He whom thou lovest is sick," and thou art come to visit me, and to lavish thy graces upon me. Ah! what more have I to wish for upon earth? I can then say with the prophet: "Turn O my soul, into thy rest: for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee,"* or repeat with the aged Simeon: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace. Because my eyes have seen thy salvation. . . . A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."†

Act of Humiliation

How hast thou come to me who have so often and grievously offended thee? Why hast thou come to a sinner? Ah! I know it: thou realisest at this moment

* Ps., cxiv. 7.

† St. Luke, ii. 29, 30.

these words of thy Gospel : "They that are well have no need for a physician, but they that are sick."†

Yes, may it be so, O my good Master ! Pour, O charitable Samaritan, the oil and wine of thy grace on the wounds of my poor soul. Heal one of all the wounds given me by the enemies of my salvation. Remember my iniquities no more.

Act of Contrition.

I have passed in review before thee all my life ; I have confessed my sins, and I have the pleasing confidence that thou hast pardoned me. Grant, I beseech thee, that this pardon may extend to all the sins I have committed, for there is not one that I do not deplore from the bottom of my heart, and which I am not prepared to avoid at the cost of the greatest sacrifices.

I offer thee, in expiation for my sins and in reparation of all my offences against thee, my sufferings and my death ; and that thou mayest accept this oblation, I unite it with that of thy body and blood which thou hast made on Calvary for the forgiveness of sins, and which thou renewest on our altars.

Act of Importunity.

Strengthened with the heavenly viaticum, I wish only to think of heaven. Inebriated with the blood of Jesus, I will breathe only for Jesus, and forget all besides. I have eaten the bread of God, and I sigh only for the possession of God, who alone is infinite happiness. Strengthened by the food of heaven, I will

* St. Mark, ii. 27.

courageously close my career here below, without being repelled by the sufferings I may encounter at the end of the voyage. Like St. Paul, I say: "But one thing *I do*: forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before."*

At this moment, O Master full of goodness, I renew my engagements to serve thee, my promises or my religious vows and I consecrate to thee every moment I have yet to pass upon earth. Thou hast given thyself to me, and I give myself to thee: Oh! grant I beseech thee that that reciprocal gift may be forever.

Act of Union.

Do not leave me, O my Saviour. Since thou art in me, remain in me O my beloved. My soul clings to thee to go through thee to thy Father.

I adore him as you adored him on earth, and I repeat with thee: "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit."†

I put my trust in thee, O divine Mediator! and I rest under the shadow of thy protection. If my hour has come, I will sleep in the arms of my Saviour, to awaken with him in paradise.

Thou art my beloved, thou art all my love. O unparalleled beauty, O brightness of the Father, when shall I behold thee unveiled? When shall I enjoy thee with the elect who see thee face to face? Behold the desires of my heart, and grant them. Grant me the

* Philipp., iii. 13, 14.

† St. Luke, xxiii. 46.

same favor as the penitent thief, and that I may be with thee in thy kingdom.

Act of Petition.

O good Jesus, adorable Master! my light, my consolation, my hope, allow me to say to thee like the disciples going to Emmaus: "Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent"*. The period of our earth life on is that of thy mercy, hear it now the more because that time is about to end. Hasten, O divine Redeemer, to complete the work of my sanctification.

Listen to the prayer of thy sick servant, and deign to satisfy for me the justice of thy Father, to purify me in thy blood, to place me in charity and make me persevere therein. Grant that I may experience the effects of thy goodness in this time of grace, and still more in that other, perhaps at hand, when my soul shall burst the bonds that keep it in the exile of this world, and will go to present itself before thee. Oh! grant it mercy, and that in my regard may be fulfilled these words thou hast spoken: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. †

Act of Invocation of the Saints.

O Mary, divine Mother of my Saviour, in the name of your adorable Jesus whom I possess within me, deign to grant me your protection, and to hear in its

* Luke, xxiv. 29. † St. John, vi. 55.

to you: "Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." Amen.

And you, O glorious St. Joseph, remember that you are the patron of a good death, and grant that mine may resemble yours.

full extent this prayer which I have so often addressed

My good angel guardian, continue your charitable care for me, until I be admitted to banquet with you in paradise on the bread of heaven. Great saint, whom the Church gave to me as a patron when she admitted me among the number of her children, holy protector whose name I have borne in religion, and all you saints of God pray for me that I may yet go to celebrate with you the endless mercies of the Soul.

PRAYER.

O most high God, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, who hast told us by the mouth of the wise man to offer Thee gifts worthy of Thee, I offer Thee thy adorable Son who has come to visit me and with whom I make but one. Look O loving Father, on the face of thy Christ, and in consideration of him, graciously hear me.

Through Jesus I adore Thee, I thank Thee for thy numberless favors, I ask pardon of all my sins, I pray for the fulness of Thy graces, and I wish also to supply for every thing that has been wanting in the homage I have paid thee through the whole course of my life. In consideration of Jesus who prays to Thee in me, deign to receive me among thy saints, and to admit me to praise Thee with them for ever and ever. Amen.

SEVENTIETH MEDITATION.

SACRIFICE OF MASS—ITS NATURE.

“Do this in commemoration of me.”—St. Luke, xxii. 19.

CONSIDERATION.

“THE holy Eucharist,’ says the blessed Canisius, ‘was instituted not merely to serve as the food of Christians, but also to be offered up as the great sacrifice of the covenant:—Whence it is not only called “heavenly food, the chalice of Salvation, the living bread, the bread of life,” but it has received also from the beginning the names of “the host, the sacrifice, the victim, the oblation, the holocaust.”

It is the true and only sacrifice celebrated in the whole Church to be to us as a perpetual memorial of the passion of our Lord, to testify our gratitude to God, to serve for the remission of the sins not only of the living but of the dead, to remove evil from us and obtain for us good things both in this life and in the next.

“This sacrifice,’ says St. Augustine, ‘has succeeded all the sacrifices of the Old Law which were only shadows of that which was to be one day offered up.”

"We offer in our Churches,' says St. Cyril of Alexandria, 'the holy sacrifice, life-giving and unbloody, whilst we firmly believe that it is not the body and blood of a man like ourselves, or who has nothing more than we have, but bowing down in adoration we adore therein the very body and blood of the Word the universal source of life."

This sacrifice was established by Jesus Christ himself. "After having kept the figurative pasch and eaten the lamb with his apostles," says St. Jerome, 'he takes bread which constitutes the strength of man, and passes at once to the celebration of the real pasch, by offering his true body and true blood under those emblems of bread and wine which Melchisedech the priest of the Most High had made use of in his figurative offering."

"Our Lord," says the holy Council of Trent; * 'was once to offer himself to God his Father, by dying on the altar of the cross, there to work out an everlasting redemption; but since his priesthood was not to be extinguished by his death, and in order to leave his dear spouse a visible sacrifice such as the nature of man required, at the last supper and on the very night when he was betrayed, that divine Master offered his body and his blood to God the Father, under the appearances of bread and wine, and he gave them under the same appearances to his apostles whom he then appointed priests of the New Testament."

By these words: "Do this in commemoration of

* Sess., xxii. ch. 1.

me," he commanded them and their successors in the priesthood to offer up his body and his blood.

"After having kept the ancient pasch which the assembly of the Children of Israel offered in memory of their departure from Egypt he established a new pasch leaving himself to be offered up by his priests in the name of the Church under visible signs for a commemoration of his passage from this world to his Father when he redeemed us by the shedding of his blood, when he delivered us from the power of darkness, and transferred us to his own kingdom.

"He has established the Eucharistic sacrifice to represent the bloody sacrifice once offered up upon the cross, to preserve its memory to the end of time and to apply its salutary virtue towards the remission of the sins we commit daily."

"The sacrifice of the Mass, says the blessed Canisius is a true and living representation, and at the same time an unbloody oblation but none the less efficacious of the passion of Our Lord, of that bloody sacrifice which was offered for us on the cross.

"Jesus Christ is our victim immolated in a bloody and in an unbloody manner. In the former case, he made the sacrifice but once in a single place of Judea; in the second, he reiterates it millions of times and in every part of the Church. Then he offered himself while dying; now he offers himself to make a living and perpetual commemoration of his death, and to make its salutary effects flow down upon us as on its members."

"It is by means of this unbloody sacrifice," says the

holy Council of Trent, ‘that we receive with abundance the fruit of that which was offered up with the shedding of his blood.’

On the altar, as on the cross, Jesus Christ is priest and victim of the same sacrifice, but with some differences in the manner of offering it.

On the cross Jesus Christ offered himself: on the altar, he offers himself by the ministry of his priests, who do visibly what he does invisibly.

On the cross the victim was visible, the blood was shed and flowed forth before the eyes of witnesses; on the altar, the victim is veiled beneath the accidents of bread and wine: his blood although truly present, is shed only in figure, his death takes place only in representation.

On Calvary, there was the immolation but not the distribution of the victim; in our Churches, not only is the victim offered but it is distributed.

There Jesus Christ offered himself suffering, dying, dead; here he offers himself also risen again and ascending into heaven. Therefore the priest says he offers the sacrifice to renew the memory of the passion, the resurrection, and the ascension of our divine Lord.

Such is considered in its nature, the great sacrifice of the mass by which, according to the expression of the royal prophet: “He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord: . . . he hath given food to them that fear him.”*

* Ps., ex. 4, 5.

APPLICATION.

Let us be ourselves convinced, and convince the souls of those entrusted to us of the excellence, and sublimity of the holy sacrifice of the mass, whose greatness and efficacy nothing can express, and which exhausts the admiration of heaven itself.

Let us bless our Lord for having established it, and for thus having given us this incomparable means of commemorating his mysteries and applying to ourselves their fruits. Let us appreciate it as a favor most deserving of our gratitude that we can assist daily at this holy sacrifice. Let us give God thanks for it and study to draw from it the fruits of sanctification it ought to produce.

Let us with zeal and love instruct our pupils in the nature and virtue of the holy sacrifice of the mass, and on the dispositions with which they ought to assist at it. Let us make them esteem and love it. Above all, let us neglect no means to make them faithful observers of the precept that commands them to hear mass on Sundays and Holidays.

Let us always assist at holy mass with the most sincere, the most lively, and the most affectionate piety. "See" exclaims St. John Chrysostom, "how Jesus Christ took to heart that we should constantly bear in mind that he died for us." Let us then frequently think of it, and be at the foot of the altar as Mary stood at the foot of the cross on Calvary.

Let us hear the divine Victim thus address us:

“Remember me, see my wounds, see my blood poured forth for you, see my heart pierced with a lance, and forget not how I love you.”

Let us unite the dispositions of our soul with those of Mary and St. John present at the death of our Savior, or with Magdalen's when she mingled her tears with the blood of expiation. With eyes fixed at once on Calvary and the altar, let us pay our homage to Jesus the victim, and let us learn from him to sacrifice ourselves for the glory of his Father, to work for our own sanctification and contribute to that of our neighbor.

PRAYER.

O divine Word, my own Jesus, whom I see offered up on the altar, it is love for me that makes thee there a victim: it is just that I should sacrifice myself wholly for thee. Yes, my God, my Supreme Lord, I this day sacrifice to thee all my soul, all myself, all my will, all my life.

I unite my sacrifice, O eternal Father, to the infinite sacrifice which thy adorable Son made of himself to thee upon the cross, and which he renews daily on the altar. Deign to accept it, through the merit, of that loving Savior, and to give me the grace to renew it every day of my life, and to die while sacrificing myself to procure thy glory.” *

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 352.)

* St. Ligouri.

SEVENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

EXCELLENCE OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

“From the rising of the sun even to the going down . . . there is offered to my name a clean oblation.”—Mal., i. 11.

CONSIDERATION.

How great, august, and sublime is the sacrifice of our altars! The most High with his angels and saints finds therein his glory, and man finds there his joy, happiness and consolation. God is its priest and victim. The priest who offers it is alone holy, alone capable of his own nature of presenting himself to the divine Majesty, and it is by this he presents himself, not with the blood of sheep and calves, as did the priests of the old law, but with his own blood which he there offers up for us.

This sacrifice is the admiration of the angels who there offer up their homage of adoration and love to the sacred Victim. “These heavenly spirits,” says St. Chrysostom, ‘descend in great numbers when the priest pronounces the words of consecration, and remain there with the most profound respect until the end of the holy sacrifices.’ In our churches as well as in the

eternal temple of the Lamb, they sing to each other that canticle of the new Sion: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty who was, who is, and is to come." *

"The holy mass," says the council of Trent, 'is the pure oblation which cannot be sullied by the unworthiness or malice of those who offer it, the oblation prefigured by all the sacrifices of the law of nature and the written law, sacrifices of which it is the consummation and the perfection, since it contains all the good that they signified.'

Compared to the holy mass, what were the sacrifices of Abel, Noah, Melchisedech, or even all those prescribed by the Mosaic law? They were only prophetic types, an imperfect figure, a shadow. . . . On our altars; O sweet Savior, you are the eternal priest according to the order of Melchisedech, and the true victim by which God is satisfied and earth enriched with blessings.

Mass is the only sacrifice that is offered: all the others have ceased, for from the day of the death of our Savior, there could only be the great sacrifice of the cross renewing itself in a mystical way in the sanctuaries of the Christian world.

It is a universal sacrifice giving an entire fulfillment to these words which the Lord spoke by his prophet Malachias: "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation."

It is a perpetual sacrifice representing and renewing

* Apoc., iv. 8.

unceasingly that of Calvary. O prodigy of the love of Jesus Christ! That divine Savior, according to his promise is with us even to the consummation of the world offering for us to his Father his cross, his blood, his death. His oblation is never interrupted; completed in one place, it begins in another; there is not an instant in which the holy sacrifice is not celebrated; the sun is always rising on priests at the altar and faithful Christians kneeling before the adorable victim who offers himself to God for the salvation of the world.

Oh! how that character of immortality and perpetuity ought to inspire us with admiration and gratitude, for by it all Christians can be present on Calvary, all generations can prostrate themselves at the foot of the cross to gather the fruits of the bloody sacrifice offered upon that sacred wood!

“If that sacrifice,’ says the author of the *Imitation*, ‘was offered up only in one place, and by one priest! with what ardor would men run towards that place and that priest! But there are many altars and many priests, so that the goodness of God may be more visible, and that all men may have it in their power to share in the gift of his mercy.”

Holy mass is a sacrifice necessary for the Church and the world. Ah! what would Christian worship be without this holy oblation? Could there even be a Christian worship? Would not the Church want that which is essential to it as a religious society? What would constitute its unity, its perpetuity, its strength, its vitality?

Without the Eucharist as a sacrifice, there would not be the Eucharist as a sacrament; consequently the bread of life would not be distributed to the faithful, and moral death would be found every where for Jesus Christ has said: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you."* Moreover, what voice would arise from the earth to heaven to ask our forgiveness, and thus to serve as a counterpoise to so many crimes that call down upon us the vengeance of God?

Mass is a salutary sacrifice, producing the most numerous, the most desirable, the most consoling fruits of grace. Every thing that belongs to it leads to the practice of virtue. The mere sight of the altar where it is celebrated, and which in the ages of the Church was the tomb of some martyr, raises our thoughts towards heaven, rekindles our faith and hope, and makes us enter into the spirit of these words of St. Augustine: "We offer this sacrifice to God who crowned the martyrs; we offer it in remembrance of them and in the very place where he crowned them, so that the sight of the theatre of their victory may excite still more the sentiments with which we ought to be affected in regard to those former soldiers of Christ, whom we ought to imitate, and in regard to God who by his grace makes us capable of doing it."

The ornaments, the linen and sacred vessels, the lights, the ceremonies, the words, the music, everything reminds us and helps us to meditate on the divine

* St. John, vi. 54.

mysteries of religion, everything urges us to render to Jesus Christ the King of martyrs, love for love, sacrifice for sacrifice, and to pray with humility, fervor and confidence to the heavenly Father for ourselves, and for all persons who are dear to us.

Yes, we can pray with confidence, for we pray in the name of Jesus Christ to whom nothing can be refused, and who has said : “ Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, that shall I do.” *

“ The sacrifice of the mass,’ says Father Faber, ‘ is of itself infinite ; our want of fervor, alone puts limits to it. It is the channel through which all graces are poured forth upon the world. What temporal calamities this divine sacrifice continually preserves us from ! From the altar on which it is offered there rises unceasingly to the majesty of the most holy Trinity a fresh incense of adoration, thanksgiving, atonement, and supplication, and those pious prayers framed by the imperfect words of man, have a value equal to the infinite value of the uncreated God !

There is not a soothing to the sufferings of purgatory which does not flow like a solatary balm from the superabundant chalice which is offered up at the altar ; there is no increase of glory in heaven which is not due to the holy sacrifice ; there is no new citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem whom the adorable Victim has not brought safe and sound to the shore where everlasting peace awaits him.”

* St. John, xiv. 13.

APPLICATION.

Convinced of the greatness of the sacrifice of our altars, let us assist at it with the most lively piety, and the most profound recollection. If on entering the church we could see assembled there all the heavenly court, the most Blessed Virgin with the angelic hierarchies and the legions of the elect, with what sentiments of admiration and love should we be filled! Now, let us remember that He is in our sanctuaries who is alone more than all heaven, and that there he is a victim for our salvation.

Let us respect everything that has reference to the holy sacrifice, and let us testify that respect by our words and conduct. Let everything in us manifest the greatest veneration for priests, for the Church, for the ceremonies and sacred music. . . .

Let us be careful to teach our pupils to hear mass well. Let us instruct them with zeal in all that it is important that they should know regarding this great mystery and especially in the obligation of hearing mass on Sundays and holidays.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, adorable Host, since you unceasingly sacrifice thyself for us, grant that we may always participate in the fruits of thy sacrifice, and to that end, that we may assist at it with the most lively faith, the most unbounded hope, the most affectionate

charity. . . . So that by thy merits which you there apply to our souls we may become more and more agreeable to thy Father and may obtain from his goodness to be admitted to see thee and glorify thee in heaven.

(see RESUMES, page 363.)

SEVENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

HOLY MASS, A SACRIFICE OF ADORATION.

“I will sacrifice to thee the sacrifice of praise.”—Ps., cxv. 17.

CONSIDERATION.

ADORATION is the first of our duties to God, and therefore that sovereign Master has made it the first of his commandments: “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him only” * Every page of the sacred scriptures speaks to us directly or indirectly of that duty, for there under a thousand forms we meet with these sentiments of the royal prophet: “All the nations thou hast made shall come and adore before thee, O Lord, and they shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and doest wonderful things: Thou art God alone † Praise ye him for his mighty acts; praise ye him according to the multitude of his greatness” ‡

God in fact is infinite greatness in comparison with whom all other greatness sinks into nothing: he is King of Kings, Lord of lords, the creator, the conservator, the supreme Master of all things; he possesses in their essence and fulness, being, power, wisdom, goodness,

* Deut., x. 20. † Ps., lxxxv. 9, 10. ‡ *Ibid.*, cl. 2.

and immensity. . . it is to him alone belongs glory, majesty, and independence.

How great an obligation we have then to praise and bless him at all times and in every place, by acknowledging and proclaiming his perfections ! Master of heaven, and earth, he is entitled to an homage of respect as infinite as is his dignity.

But who will pay him this homage ? Shall it be rendered by us children of men ? Alas ! we have of ourselves no other inheritance than nothingness and sin ? How then could we worthily glorify the supreme being ? Placed already in the depths of the abyss by the infirmities of our nature and the weight of our iniquities, how could the voice of our praises arise to the throne of the Most High ?

We cannot but offer him an imperfect homage, and it is so also with other mere creatures, how great soever may be their sanctity and merits.

To render to God the homage which is his due an infinite subjection is necessary : now who can be capable of this but himself ? We can imagine no deeper humiliation than destruction and death which really takes place in the homage of supreme adoration, or the sacrifice of holocaust : but though all men should undergo death or the whole universe be annihilated, it would only be an homage of limited dependence and consequently out of proportion with what is due to God.

We are that servant of the Gospel who owed his master ten thousand talents, and which he was absolutely unable to pay him.

However what we cannot do of ourselves, becomes possible to us through Our Lord Jesus Christ. That divine mediator has rendered and continues to render to God his Father an homage of adoration which, proceeding from a divine person is necessarily infinite, and that homage he has offered and still offers in his own name and in that of all creatures, thus satisfying for the debt which of ourselves we could not cancel.

To glorify his Father, he divested himself of his splendor, and put on, according to the expression of the Apostle, "the form of a servant," in assuming our nature he passed his life in privation and toil, and he died a most cruel and ignominious death.

To glorify his Father, he perpetuated the sacrifice of which he is both priest and victim, reproducing mystically on our altars his humiliations, his sufferings and his death, and offering there to the sovereign majesty the same homage of submission which he offered to him on the cross, at that every moment when "bowing down his head, he gave up the ghost."*

Mass is then, as the Chnrch teaches, a sacrifice of *latraria*, or adoration, by which the Man-God worthily acknowledges the greatness of God, and pays him all the tribute of glory due to him. There the priest is God, the victim is God: the sacrifice then contains an infinite humiliation. Ah ! if the last of the humiliations of the Incarnate word was sufficient to honor the Father worthily what must be thought of the glory he procures him by humbling himself even to do as he did at

* St. John, xix. 30.

Calvary, and which he continued to do mystically in our temples.

Therefore, in the celebration of the holy sacrifice, the Church sings with every transport of joy and admiration : “ Glory to God in the highest. . . Yes O Lord, we praise thee, we bless thee, we adore thee, we glorify thee, thou who art the Sovereign Master, the Most High, the only true God, the Father Almighty.”

No, the Lord can receive no homage comparable to that which the true Isaac consummating his sacrifice offers to him on our altars. The voice of the blood of that beloved Son covers every other voice.

Supposing then, on our side, the faith of the patriarchy, the zeal of the prophets and the apostles, the courage of the martyrs the piety of the confessors, the purity of the virgins, the obedience of the angels and archangels, the love of the Cherubim and Seraphim, and even the supereminent sanctity of the glorious Virgin Mary ; and supposing, on the other side, one mass only one, offered up by a priest, no matter by whom, that mass would give more glory to God than all the others, because all the others considered in themselves are limited, whilst the oblation of Jesus our victim is an infinite offering.

O sublime sacrifice ! O unparalleled praise ! Here nothing is wanting on the side of the priest or on the side of the victim. The holocaust is perfect. An infinite honor is paid to God by his Son acting in the name of humanity, of which he has become a member. We can, on condition of our union with that divine Mediator

cancel through him the debt that we owe to our Father who is in heaven: for in offering himself up before our eyes, he puts at our disposal his voice, his merits, and his blood. Our homage consecrated by his, rises like a sweet incense to the throne of the Most High who accepts the tribute of our praise and recompenses our piety by enriching us with the gifts of his munificence.

APPLICATION.

Let us rejoice at being able to fulfil thus worthily the first of our obligations. Let us bless the Incarnate wisdom of God which invented and put into our hands this means of paying off our debt to his infinite majesty. For this purpose let us enter as perfectly as possible into the dispositions of Jesus Christ the victim of the holocaust.

Let us acknowledge and confess that we are in the most absolute sense, subjects of God, dependents on God, debtors to God for all we have and all we are. Let us humble ourselves more and more before his sovereign greatness. Let us aspire only to annihilate ourselves, to exalt his infinite perfections.

Let us assist at mass with the most profound respect, the most religious recollectedness, and show by our modesty and piety, that we feel the sublimity of the mysteries that take place on the altar.

Let us adore with all the powers of our soul the divine Victim of our sacrifice and by it the Sovereign Master to whom are due all honor and praise. Let us offer to the Father to supply for the insufficiency of our homage,

that which his adorable Son offers to him. Let us unite in spirit and heart with Jesus in the sacred Host and be with him and through him victims of holocaust, not only during the sacrifice but in the whole course of our lives. In all our actions let us seek only the glory of God; let us know how to renounce ourselves for the love of God; let us desire and follow after only one thing, the establishment of the kingdom of God and the perfect accomplishment of his holy will.

PRAYER.

“O holy Father, I offer to thee Him whom the just Simeon received into his arms, that same Jesus thy adorable Son the sole object of thy delight, I offer him as he offered himself to thee I offer him to thee with the sentiments of love and devotedness to thy glory with which he was animated from the first instant of his life until he gave his heavenly son to his father on the cross.

O loving Father, look with a favorable eye on this oblation I make to thee, my God and Sovereign Master. Accept it as a worthy homage to thy eternal glory.”*

I beseech thee by the merit of the incomparable praise which rises incessantly to thee upon the altar to grant us the grace of blessing thee unceasingly in time, and to bless thee afterwards in eternity. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 363.)

* Prayer of St. Gertrude.

SEVENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

THE HOLY MASS, A SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING.

“What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that he hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation; and I will call upon the name of the Lord.”—Ps., cxv. 12, 13..

CONSIDERATION.

If gratitude is measured by the dignity of the benefactor, the number and excellence of his gifts, and the generosity with which he distributes them, how great ought be our gratitude towards God?

This sovereign Master of heaven and earth, deigns to look upon us in our poverty, for the purpose of lavishing his favors on us. O mystery of infinite goodness! The eternal and almighty King became our servant, creating this world for us with all that it contains, enlightening our mind with the light of truth, pulling us and guiding us in the path of justice, defending us against our enemies, raising us up after our falls and steadyng our steps, preparing for us a place in his kingdom.

His benefits preceded our birth and have not ceased to multiply since then. Ah! who can imagine how

much we are indebted to his paternal solicitude and mercy, in the order both of nature and grace? Does there pass a moment, or a second, in which we do not experience in a thousand ways the effects of his goodness? Is it not by him that we exist, that we enjoy life, health, and reason? . . . Is it not through Him that every thing exists that serves for our use?

Is he not constantly acting in us by his grace, to point out to us and make us embrace and follow the path of virtue? Has he not placed a prince of the court of heaven as guardian over us? Has he not given us his Son himself for our redemption and salvation? . . . Let us remember moreover that not only do we merit the favors with which he enriches us, but that our sins make us deserving only of his chastisements.

How much reason has the Church, then, to sing in her office: "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is truly meet and right, just and salutary that we should always and everywhere give thanks to thee, O holy Lord, Almighty Father."

But what can I offer you O my God, that has any proportion to what I receive from you? What in your eyes are the things which we have at our disposal? and besides, do they not already belong to you infinitely more than to us? If then we ask ourselves with the holy King David: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things he hath rendered to me? we are obliged to confess our inability to pay what we owe."

However, the prophet points out a means by which

man can discharge his debt towards God: "I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord." That chalice is what is always offered up upon our altars; it is the blood of the divine Victim who offers himself in sacrifice for us every day.

It is in truth, one of the ends of the great sacrifice, to thank our Lord worthily for all his favors, to discharge in his regard, in its full extent, the debt of our gratitude.

Jesus Christ, says St. Irenæus, has instituted the sacrifice of the mass that we might not be for ever unable to discharge our debt to God. "Without this means, we should remain always under the debt of an infinite obligation, since his benefits are infinite; but by the holy sacrifice of the mass we can thank him at all times and in all places and offer him as much as we receive.

How often does the faithful soul, filled with the thought of the blessings of our Lord, experience as it were, an irresistible necessity to thank him, and give free scope to its holy impulses! Why have I not, it exclaims, a thousand hearts to love my God, a thousand tongues to celebrate the works of his goodness! Why can I not mingle my voice with that of the angels to bless him in the midst of the beauty of heaven? But are not these desires realized and beyond what we could imagine, by the offering of the holy sacrifice where we have at our disposal the infinite homage which the Incarnate Word himself, the Lord of the angels, the Master of heaven pays to God his Father?

Let that soul hear holy mass devoutly, and God will be more satisfied than he would be by the fulfilment of all its wishes.

Jesus Christ, the Eucharistic victim, discharges fully in regard to his Father and in the name of all creatures, the duties that true gratitude requires: the remembrance of benefits received, esteem and love for the benefactor, thanks and an offering in return. Is not the holy sacrifice of Mass the memorial and abridgement of all the wonders of the goodness and munificence of his Father? Does he not render to him, and all the Church with him, a perfect homage of adoration and love? Does he not in offering himself, offer a gift that equals and infinitely surpasses all the favors bestowed on us?

O Jesus, adorable Victim, be blessed for becoming our victim of thanksgiving. Through you, O divine Host, we can make a full return to God for what we have received from his liberality, for it is to return him everything, to offer him his adorable Son, the sole object of his complacency.

O what a motive for us, Christian souls, to admire and praise our divine Savior! He put himself in our place to bless his Father in our name. The head of the human race, he thanks God in the name of all men; in the name of those who are united to him in disposition and who wish to thank God through Him, and of those who forget to thank him or who cannot. Thus he supplies the inability of created beings to pay to the Creator, the Conservator of all things the tribute of gratitude they owe him.

O divine sacrifice, how can we worthily appreciate you ! You place in our hands a price so great in the eyes of God, that it fully compensates for all the favors with which he has enriched us. Yes, we can present ourselves with confidence before his throne of grace and make him the offering of a gift that equals all his gifts ; we can pay to him through you an homage worthy of him, one that merits for us new favors until we shall be admitted to celebrate his infinite goodness in those abodes of happiness where the angels and saints sing an everlasting hymn of gratitude and love.

APPLICATION.

What an advantage it is for us to be able to assist daily at the holy sacrifice, there to bless and adore Jesus our victim, to offer him to his Father in return for all his favors, to unite ourselves to him in spirit and heart, and to enter into all his dispositions as a victim of thanksgiving !

Let us study to develop in our souls, as well as in those of our pupils, a sentiment of gratitude : what motives have we not, and above all, to whom the Lord has been so generous ? We are constantly asking of him, but seldom thanking him : is not this selfishness and ingratitude ? Moreover, how greatly we thereby understand our true interests ! For gratitude towards God is a most eloquent prayer, and one most calculated to make us the objects of his liberality ; whilst ingratitude, as St. Bernard says, is a burning wind which dries up the source of piety, the dew of mercy the river of grace.

Let us assist at mass, and beg our pupils to assist at it with a view especially to thank our Lord for the graces with which he enriched the most blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, the holy angels, our holy patrons and all the saints : and also for his favors to the Church, the Institute, our families, ourselves, and all those who are dear to us.

Let us frequently offer up holy communion with the intention of thanking him for his gifts, but above all when he has favored us with some particular grace. Oh ! how he accepts our gratitude when our heart is united to the heart of Jesus, and when our homages come to him through the mouth of that beloved Son with whom we make but one and who loves and blesses him in us, as he loves and blesses him in heaven !

PRAYER.

How happy I am, O holy Father, that I am able through the victim of our altars to offer thee a worthy homage of gratitude. Mayst thou be, through that divine Victim and all creatures, extolled and blessed through eternity for thy numberless favors.

O Jesus, adorable Mediator, all amiable Saviour, God of the Eucharist, be always our thanksgiving, so that having through thee worthily glorified thy Father, we may admitted one day to bless him with thee in heaven. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 364.)

SEVENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

HOLY MASS, A SACRIFICE OF EXPIATION.

“Behold the Lamb of God; behold him who taketh away the sins of the world.”—St. John, i. 29.

CONSIDERATION.

SIN, as it outrages the infinite majesty of God, has under that respect an infinite malice and consequently necessitates an infinite reparation, which as is evident, must come from a person absolutely exempt from sin and infinitely dear to God.

Now, who will make this reparation? We the children of man cannot, for we have been conceived in sin and we commit it moreover so frequently! Besides, what could we offer as an homage of expiation? Whatever be our tears, our prayers, our penances, they could never of themselves make up an infinite reparation!

Neither the angels and saints, not even the holy Virgin Mary, could ever, outside of the atonements of Jesus Christ, compensate for the outrage one single sin offers to God: how much less could they compensate for the outrage of the many sins that have been committed, or will yet be committed upon earth!

To atone for sin it was necessary that he should be-

come a victim who is sanctity itself, and who has caused himself to be called the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world; it was necessary that the sacrifice should be offered up by the High Priest, who, not having faults of his own to expiate, could alone be the Mediator of our reconciliation.

This sacrifice was consummated once on Calvary, whereas the prophet had announced: "He was bruised for our sins. . . and by his bruises we are healed."* But as sin, alas! was to continue in the world even after the bloody oblation which expiated it, it entered into the designs of our Savior that his sacrifice should continue till the end of time, in an unbloody manner and with the same virtue, not only at Jerusalem, but over the whole world. On that account he instituted the sacrifice of our altars, where as priest and victim he offers to his Father that same body which was fastened to the cross, and that same blood which was poured forth for the remission of sin.

"By the mysterious sacrifice, whose secret, men could not penetrate, 'Jesus Christ,' says St. Gregory of Nyssa, offers himself as a victim for us, being at the same time the High Priest *par excellence*, and the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world."

We have thus, thanks to his infinite generosity, the means of satisfying the divine justice efficaciously and cordially. The sovereign Master whom we have offended sees on the altar his beloved Son with the stigmata of the death he suffered, he fixes his eyes on

* Isa., liii. 5.

the wounds of his hands and feet and on that of his heart ; he hears the voice of his blood rising to him and saying : “ Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”* He beholds us prostrate and united in disposition with the holy victim who prays to him for us, and for his sake he forgets our iniquities to remember only his mercy.

It is related that during a tempest, Albuquerque seeing his fleet about to be lost, took in his arms a little child and raising him towards heaven said : “ O Lord, we are sinners, and deserve to perish ; but this child is innocent. O God of goodness cast your eyes on him, and for his sake spare us.” Now, is not that a striking image of what the priest does when offering the adorable victim of our altars, through whom he asks for grace for himself and us, from the God whose anger we have provoked ?

Ah ! if we understood how much we are indebted to the holy sacrifice of mass, how great would be our gratitude towards him who established it ! Let us recall to mind the terrible chastisements of God’s justice under the old law, for instance in the punishment of the Bethsamites more than fifty thousand of whom were struck dead for having with curiosity looked into the Ark of the Covenant. Why does the Lord not act so in our days ? Are our sins less numerous, or less grievous ? . . . Ah ! it is because the holy sacrifice being celebrated every where and always, an infinite expiation is unceasingly offered for men ; it is because

* St. Luke, xxiii. 34.

the heavenly Father, when he casts his eyes on earth sees his son offering himself to him with his crown of thorns, with the wounds of his body, with his hands and feet pierced. . . . At this sight his anger is appeased, and having recourse to his clemency, he gives us the graces of conversion, and pardons us when we repent.

Holy mass is the rainbow of peace shining over our heads, as if to remind God of his promise to show us mercy, and to revive in our hearts the most entire confidence in his goodness.

The efficacy of this sacrifice extends even beyond this life, for says the holy council of Trent, "it is offered not only for the sins, the sufferings, the atonements and other necessities of the faithful while living, but also for those who are dead in Jesus Christ and who are not yet entirely purified."

If for the relief of the souls of the dead, Judas Machabeas hoped so much for the sacrifice of the old law, what should we not hope for from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? "It is not without reason," says St Chrysostom, "that the apostles ordained that we should make a commemoration of the dead in our tremendous mysteries, knowing of how much advantage it was to them. Ah! while the divine Victim is on the altars, how could we fail to move the divine justice while praying for them?"

Yes, mass is the most efficacious means to relieve and even to deliver the souls of the faithful detained in purgatory. Therefore they all turn their eyes to our

altars, repeating these words of the prophet: "I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me," * and addressing us in the language of Job: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends."†

Jesus on the altar satisfies the justice of his Father for them, and when the priest holds in his hands the chalice after consecration, he seems to hold it balanced above that place of expiation, and to incline it towards the souls for whom he prays especially, so as to allow some drops of the divine blood which is our salvation to fall upon them. By the merits of that blood he invokes the Lord in all confidence and says to him. "Remember your servants who have gone before us with the sign of faith. . . Grant them a place of refreshment, light and peace."

APPLICATION.

Let us profoundly adore our divine Lord who makes himself a victim for us and for the souls of the faithful departed. Let us thank him for having furnished us in the sacrifice of Mass, with the means of satisfying his Father for our sins. Oh! how consoling it is to have a victim to offer up every day for our sins of every day!

Let us unite ourselves to Jesus the victim of expiation. Let us bewail the misfortune we have had to offend God; let us perform works of true penance, and offer up on the altar of our heart all our appetites, all our ill-regulated passions.

Let us assist at holy Mass, with a soul filled with

* Ps., cxx. 1.

† Job, xix. 21.

sincere contrition, and let us there ask with confidence through the merits of the divine Victim whom we offer to the Lord, the pardon of all our sins.

In imitation of Job offering up victims for the secret faults of his children, let us offer up the holy sacrifice for the expiation of the sins of those who are dear to us. Let us offer it for the conversion of sinners, remembering that we can thus exercise an easy but at the same time a most efficacious apostolate.

Let us offer it up for the souls in purgatory. Ah! let us not forget our dead. Let us ask mercy for them through the divine blood which flows mystically on our altars. Let us beg our Lord to apply its virtue to such or such a soul for whom we pray, and that soul will be consoled and relieved thereby, and perhaps at that very time introduced into the mansions of eternal rest.

PRAYER.

I have sinned O my God, my Sovereign Master and I confess in thy presence that of myself I can do nothing to appease thy just anger; but, thanks to thy infinite goodness, I am permitted to take shelter behind the altar and to ask forgiveness through the infinite merits of the Victim who takes away the sins of the world. Hear then, O holy Father, the voice of the blood of thy Son, and grant me mercy.

Deign also to show mercy to the souls of my deceased brethren, to shorten their trial and to admit them to the mansions of happiness where the elect glorify the Lamb who has redeemed them by his blood, and sing in his praise a hymn of eternal gratitude.

SEVENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

HOLY MASS, THE SACRIFICE OF IMPETRATION.

“Ask, and you shall receive.”—St. John, xvi. 24.

CONSIDERATION.

WE are not, alas ! of ourselves anything but weakness, ignorance, and poverty, and without the assistance of heaven we can do nothing in the order of salvation, not even conceive a good thought, or pronounce meritoriously the holy name of Jesus. We have absolutely need of grace to begin, continue, and complete what is good, to resist the enemy of our souls, to fulfil our duties and to attain at last the happiness that God destines for us.

Now, we know that to obtain grace we must ask it of God.

But how could we dare address our prayers to him after having so grievously offended him, and so often abused his gifts ? How could our prayers reach from our lowliness to his throne ? Has not sin raised between us and Him a will of separation which we could not overturn or cross over ?

It is then necessary that we should have a mediator with God ; and that mediator is the Son of God, is

Jesus Christ our holy and merciful High-priest who beseeches his heavenly Father in our name.

He has besought him for all men during his whole life and particularly during his passion, offering his prayers then accompanied, as the apostle says, "with a strong cry and tears." *

Oh! what a prayer was that breathed by Jesus on the cross when he asked not only the pardon of his enemies, but all the graces that the human race had merited by his sacrifice ! Every thing in him prayed : his words, his sighs, his looks, his heart, his wounds, his blood, and asked that that thirst of his for the salvation of souls, that desire of our happiness, should be satisfied.

How could he fail to be heard ? could God the Father refuse the requests of his dying Son ?

Jesus Christ continues that same prayer on our altars where he renews his sacrifice. He there offers up his merits to his Father, begging him to apply them to us, and to enrich us with the gifts of his goodness ; he lays before him the necessities of the whole human race, and entreats him to relieve them by his Providence ! he prays for those who pray with him and through him, for those who do not pray or who pray amiss, and for those who know not the need they have to pray.

What a consolation, and what a motive of confidence this should be to us ! Our High-priest prays on the altar as on the cross. He offers himself to his Father with his wounds and his crown of thorns, and he begs

* Heb., v. 7.

of him the graces he has merited for us by his labors, his sufferings and his death.

“As often,’ says St Gregory, ‘as we offer up to God the sacred host, so often do we commemorate the passion, that he may apply the fruits of it to us.’ ‘Our divine Saviour,’ says the angelic Doctor, ‘applies to us the merits of his passion by the great sacrifice of the mass, to which are attached all kinds of graces and blessings.’

If then we do not deserve of ourselves to be heard, the God-man priest and victim merits it for us; and through him our supplications rise most surely from the abyss of our poverty to the throne of the most High.

Mass is the prayer by excellence. Jesus Christ there receives all our petitions makes them pass through his heart and presents them as his own petitions, to his heavenly Father, whom he entreats to exercise his infinite liberality in our behalf.

How great then is the efficacy of this divine sacrifice in bringing down upon us the graces of heaven! One single mass may be to us a source of immense spiritual treasure and relieve all our necessities, provided that on our side we place no obstacle in the way. It has in fact an infinite value which becomes finite to us only through the imperfection of our devotion on our want of good will in responding to the designs of God in our regard.

The power of impetration of this holy sacrifice extends to all men, Christians and infidels, the good and the bad,

the living and the dead. "When the sacrifice is consummated," says St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "when the unbloody offering of the Victim is made, we pray to God for the peace of the whole Church, for the tranquillity of the world, for kings, for our friends, for the sick, the afflicted and in general for all those who have need of help." "In the celebration of the holy mysteries," says St. John Chrysostom, "we pray in common for all who are not as yet initiated. 'We offer the sacrifice for the sick, for the whole world."

The sacrifice of the mass is a source of numberless graces: light to the intellect, strength to the will, fervor and unction of heart, repentance of our transgressions, resistance to temptations, encouragement in the practise of virtue, progress in sanctity, final perseverance; and in another order of things, health, peace, success with our pupils &c. All these blessings flow in abundance upon us when we assist at mass with true piety.

Why then do we remain poor, having thus in our hands the key of the treasures of heaven? Why do we die of want in the very midst of the field of which that of Booz was but the figure, and from which we can gather a most plentiful harvest?

Oh! if we understood our true interests, if we really knew the wants of our soul, with what piety and recollection should we assist at the holy sacrifice! How attentive we should be to unite in spirit and heart with what our High-priest and Victim does, and to implore through his mediation for ourselves and our neighbor the goodness, mercy, and munificence of our Father in

heaven who refuses nothing to the prayer of his adorable Son !

APPLICATION.

Let us reanimate our fervor when we assist at Mass, keeping ourselves intimately united to Jesus Christ, endeavoring to pray as he prays asking through him and with him all the good things necessary for ourselves or profitable for our sanctification and that of our neighbor. When the holy Victim is on the altar, let our hearts be there also, and united to his adorable heart let them offer up our supplications to God.

Let us pray for ourselves individually who are so poor in the riches of heaven, so weak against the devil the world and the flesh, so exposed to the danger of entering on the path of evil and being lost for eternity. Let us pray for the Church and the Vicar of Christ, for all God's ministers, and especially for those who have the care of our souls. Let us pray for our country, our society, our family, and our pupils.

Let us thank our Lord for condescending to be upon the altar our intercessor with his Father, and for having furnished us by the institution of the holy sacrifice, with so excellent a means of obtaining all that is useful and profitable to us.

Let us offer up our prayers through him with the most entire confidence, for we can ask nothing greater, than what we present to God. Let us offer to that sovereign Master, to supply the insufficiency of our prayers, the prayer of his Son priest and Victim and

let us ask that for his sake we may be kept in the path of virtue till we attain to the abode of peace which is its end.

PRAYER.

Take pity on us, O God of mercy! A thousand dangers always encompass us, many enemies assail us day and night: weak as we are we cannot alas but yield, unless you come to our assistance. We do not deserve thy help, but thy adorable Son has, merited it for us, and asks it for us. Consider, O holy Father, the state to which he has humbled himself on our altars, and hear the prayer which he addresses to thee, and with which we unite ours.

Deign, we beseech thee, to enrich us with thy graces, so that strengthened by thee we may be able to avoid the snares of hell, to break asunder every iniquitous tie, to work out our sanctification to procure thy glory and to come at last to the eternal happiness merited for us by the saving sacrifice consummated on Calvary, and continued on our altars.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 365.)

SEVENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

DISPOSITIONS FOR HEARING MASS WELL.

“I have in simplicity joyfully offered all these things.”—
Paral. xxix. 17.

CONSIDERATION.

Of all the exercises that the Church can propose to our piety, the hearing of holy Mass is the most holy, the most excellent, and also the most salutary, if we bring to it the dispositions necessary for securing its fruits.

Let us assist at this great sacrifice with a lively faith, that is to say, with an intimate persuasion, and as far as possible the actual thought, that, under the appearances of the consecrated bread and wine, there are really present the body and blood of Jesus Christ; that adorable body which for us was fastened to the cross, that divine blood which was shed for our salvation: that this is the sacrifice of Calvary continuing down the course of ages; that the same Victim is there offered up with the same merit, for the glory of God and the redemption of the world.

Let us assist at it with piety and fervor attentive to

what is done upon the altar, making acts of love, thanksgiving, contrition, and petition, in accord with the mysteries at which we assist.

Bodily present in the Church where the holy sacrifice is offered up, let us also be present in spirit and heart on Calvary, and there in union with Mary at the foot of the cross, let us contemplate her divine Son suffering and dying for us. Let us look at him with his hands and feet pierced, his body covered with wounds, his head crowned with thorns, his countenance expressing every kind of suffering: let us watch his blood falling drop by drop upon the ground. Let us remember that that tortured body, and that blood shed for us are truly and substantially on the altar where that divine Saviour offers for us to his Father his sufferings and death which he renews in a mystical way.

“ You ought,” says the author of the *Imitation*, ‘ to consider attentively this great mystery of salvation. When you hear mass it ought to be to you as great, as novel, as agreeable a thing as if on that very day, Jesus Christ descending into the womb of the most spotless Virgin became man, or fastened to the cross, suffered and died for men.”

That is what the Church asks of the faithful, for, says blessed Canisius, “ all the pomp she has thought proper to give to the sacrifice of the altar, the sacred ornaments, the precious vessels, the ceremonies, all has for its object to keep present to us the memory of the mysteries and favors of Jesus Christ, to give us a higher idea of the great sacrifice of mass, and to lead

the faithful by these signs and exterior helps to the contemplation of the great things there celebrated."

Let us then be careful not to assist at mass with indifference, coldness, or unwillingness. Let us hear it in the way we know to be most profitable to us, either for instance, by meditating on the mysteries of Jesus Christ, or by considering the different ceremonies and entering into the spirit of each, or by reciting prayers in harmony with the different parts of the sacrifice. Let us take pleasure above all in the prayers of the liturgy so admirably marked with the spirit of God, and breathing such a sweet perfume of piety.

Let us if possible, communicate sacramentally remembering that it is the best means of testifying that we truly take part in the sacrifice, and that the Church expresses the desire through the holy council of Trent, that the faithful should communicate every time they assist at mass. At least, let us make a spiritual communion which is the source of many graces.

United spirit and heart with Jesus Christ priest and victim, let us profoundly adore our Father in heaven; let us thank him for his numberless favors; let us ask his pardon for our sins and those of others; let us implore his mercy in behalf of the souls in purgatory; let us beg him to pour down his graces upon us. Let us offer ourselves to him to be entirely consecrated to his service, "for," says the author of the *Imitation*, 'there is no oblation more worthy, and no satisfaction efficacious for effacing sins than the pure and entire

sacrifice of ourselves to God, joining it with the offering of the body of Jesus Christ."

Let us be silent and recollected during mass, evincing by our whole exterior our faith in the greatness, the sanctity of our mysteries; let us avoid turning our eyes from side to side; let us by our demeanor edify all who may observe us. Let us be well persuaded that we should be before the altar like angels before the throne of God; that our soul should be penetrate with respect, seized with a holy trembling, for nothing is done in the world nor even in heaven, more august, or more sacred than is performed on our altars.

Let us assist at mass with an ardent desire for the graces of God, and a firm will to correspond faithfully with all that will be given to us. Let us consider the wants of our souls, and what spiritual riches we find in the offering of the holy sacrifice "wherein we participate in all the merits of Jesus Christ that divine Saviour whose charity is never diminished, and whose greatness and mercy are unexhaustible." *

Let us each time propose to ourselves some especial intention. Let us beg the light and strength we require to fulfil all the designs of God in our regard; but let us ask them with a will determined to do for that purpose all that is in our power.

Oh! how prodigal the Lord would be of his gifts to us, if he saw in our hearts a true resolution to make them bear fruit; Has not Jesus Christ said: "you. . . . should bring forth fruit and your fruit should remain?" †

* Imit., book iv. ch. 11. 6. † St. John, xv. 16.

How could the Father place limits to his generosity if by our interior dispositions we said to him : You wish, O Lord, that I should glorify you by my sanctifications and my zeal for that of my neighbor ; that your will should be done ; behold me ready for all by the help of your grace which I implore of you through the great victim we now offer you.

Let us assist at mass, animated by a true charity for our neighbor to whom we can be of so great assistance. Let us remember the spiritual and temporal wants of our relations, our superiors, our brothers in religion, our friends, and our pupils. Let us remember the poor souls in purgatory who turn to us their eyes bathed in tears, and let us reflect that we have through Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament all power over the heart of the King of heaven. We are it is true unworthy of his favors, but we offer him his Son who is the object of his delight, or rather it is that very Son himself who offers himself to him in our name, and who presents our prayers which he makes his own.

From time to time, let us assist at mass with the thought that perhaps it is the last we shall ever have the happiness to hear, and let us with all the fervor of our souls ask for final perseverance, that grace of graces which crowning in us the work of God makes us worthy to be admitted with the angels and saints into the heavenly Jerusalem.

APPLICATION.

Is it with these dispositions and fidelity to these practices that we hear holy mass? Does our conscience give us that consoling testimony or does it address reproaches to us on that head? In the former case let us thank God and persevere for we are on the right path; but in the latter case, let us make haste to reform our conduct. For this purpose, let us meditate seriously on the greatness and efficacy of the sacrifice of our altars, on the spiritual and temporal advantages of which it may be the source, either to ourselves personally, or to our neighbor. Let us think on the wants of our soul which alas! is so poor and so miserable, and on the ease with which we can make it truly rich in the treasures of grace and through them, in those of future glory.

PRAYER.

“O Lord, everything in heaven and earth belongs to thee I wish to offer myself to thee in voluntary oblation and in the simplicity of my heart, to be thy servant forever: I offer myself to thee as an homage and sacrifice of eternal praise. Receive me with the holy oblation of thy precious body which I this day offer to thee in presence of the angels who invisibly assist at it; so that I may be a work of salvation to me and all thy people.

O Lord, I place on thy altar of propitiation all the sins I have committed, that thou mayst pardon me them all, and in thy mercy admit me to the kiss of peace.”

(see RÉSUMÉS, page 365.)

SEVENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION.

"He who adheres to the Lord, is one spirit."—1 Cor., vi. 17.

CONSIDERATION.

The faithful who are animated by a true spirit of piety make it their happiness to respond to the wish of the Church and to communicate sacramentally every time they hear mass, and when circumstances do not allow them, they supply the omission by a spiritual communion, "eating with affection and intention," according to the expression of the Council of Trent, 'that heavenly bread which they desire, and deriving fruit and advantage from it in virtue of that lively faith which works by charity.'

They conform to this recommendation of a pious author: * "open," says he, 'open all your heart by an ardent desire to receive Jesus Christ, at least spiritually: continue afterwards in an interior and exterior silence as if you felt Jesus Christ in you, and preserve as long as possible this intimate presence of your God.'

That is what spiritual communion essentially consists in, for which, however, there is no method generally laid

* Father Aorillon.

down. Many reduce it to reciting an *Ave Maria* to ask the grace of sharing in the interior dispositions of the Most holy Virgin at the moment of the Incarnation, then they unite in attention and affection with Jesus Christ beseeching him to come to them by the impression of his grace and to fix his habitation there forever, adoring him and abandoning themselves to him to act wholly under his guidance.

Spiritual communion has been earnestly recommended by the saints and the most experienced directors of souls, and it enters into the intentions of the Church. "Every time" says St Theresa to her religious, "that you hear mass and do not approach the holy table, let nothing hinder you from making a spiritual communion. It is a practice from which you will draw abundant and precious fruits if you be truly recollected, for our Lord seizes this opportunity to spread his love in fervent souls."

"When," says St. Francis of Sales, "you cannot have the happiness of communicating sacramentally at holy mass, communicate at least in heart and spirit, uniting yourself by ardent desire with the vivifying flesh of our Lord."

"He who from some legitimate cause is hindered from communicating, says the author of the *Imitation*, should always cherish a holy and pious intention of communicating, and thus he will not be deprived of the effect of the sacrament. Every pious man can daily and at every hour communicate spiritually and with profit for we communicate mystically and are invisibly satiated

each time that we revolve devoutly in our minds the mystery of the Incarnation and passion of Jesus Christ and are inflamed with his love."

It is related of St. Angela of Merici, that when daily communion was forbidden to her, she supplied it by frequent spiritual communions at mass, and she felt herself sometimes inundated with graces like to those she would have experienced if she had communicated sacramentally. Therefore she left as a pious legacy behind her, an urgent recommendation not to neglect that holy practice.

Spiritual communion is an efficacious means of pleasing Our Lord and drawing upon ourselves his grace, for while we make it, we testify to him our esteem for the divine Eucharist, that ineffable gift of his love, we also testify our love for him, we pay him our homage of adoration and obedience, we abandon ourselves, with all that we are, entirely to him.

No, no, it cannot be but that his heart should open to the Christian, who, unable to receive him sacramentally, experiences thereat a true regret, and says to him in its dispositions: "O most sweet and most adorable Jesus, God of love, for whom alone I sigh, O heavenly Spouse, my soul is consumed for thee and by thee come to it, come to reign over all its powers. Yes be thou alone every thing to me, and that I may live only by thee and for thee."

It is an easy practice which we can do an indefinite number of times, which occasions no disarrangement which necessitates no interruption of

our ordinary occupations, and requires no exterior preparation.

We can communicate spiritually whenever we wish. However, it is recommended especially during holy mass, at the time when the priest communicates, on those days when we have not the happiness of communicating sacramentally ; and afterwards when we visit the holy sacrament or assist at benediction ; when we pass near a church : when we prepare ourselves for sacramental communion, or have recently made it.

Finally, let us consider that this is a practice of immense advantage towards our advancement in a spiritual life. No doubt, it is but a shadow of sacramental communion ; but that divine shadow has its efficacy.

Spiritual communion unites us soul to soul, heart to heart to Jesus Christ, who acts in us change us into him. By it, we participate in an especial manner in the fruits of the holy sacrifice and in the communion of the priest. It cherishes and perfects piety ; it is full of consolation and sweetness ; it nourishes devotion to the holy Eucharist ; it helps us to preserve the holy impression of sacramental communions we have made, and also to prepare us for those we purpose making ; it makes us the object of the liberalities of God, who, through it, gives us in abundance the graces of purity, piety, and zeal, as well as the graces of strength to combat against temptations, and to sustain all the trials to which we may be exposed.

APPLICATION.

Let us admire the salutary industry of Christian piety originating spiritual communion which is to us a source of so many blessings in the order of grace. Let us thank Our Lord for having suggested to his saints that marvellous means of sharing in his generosity.

Let us appreciate the advantages of the holy Eucharist, for what graces are contained in that sacrament of love which enriches not only those who receive it really, but, also those who desire to receive it !

Let us watch that our desire for sacramental communion is sincere, and springs really from the heart, and let us give as a proof of it that we make it as often as we are allowed. Let us not be of the number of those, who, under pretext that they make a spiritual communion, abstain without any other motive from sacramental communion. There is evidently in that, besides an opposition to the intentions of the Church, an illusion and an absurdity : for how can they say with truth that they desire to receive the body of Jesus Christ, when, having it in their power, they do not receive it, or when they do nothing to make themselves worthy of that great favor ?

Let us excite, and keep alive in our souls the desire of communicating really, and let us gladly seize on the occasions of satisfying it. When we cannot do that, let us make with faith, fervor, and love a spiritual communion. Let us know how to profit by this means of

sanctification by which our soul unites itself to Jesus Christ, and thereby becomes more and more like to that divine model of the predestined.

Let us propagate to the best of our power, this pious practice. Let us imbue the souls confided to our care with the pious desire of sacramental communion, and let us teach them how to make during mass, acts of desire and of union with Jesus Christ.

PRAYER.

O heavenly bread, the life of my soul, why can I not receive thee every day ! Why can I not O my Jesus possess thee always within me, as in those happy moments when I sit at thy holy table ?

O delicious food, with what ardor I desire thee ! Yes, I hunger for thee who art my consolation my joy, my light, my strength, my salvation.

Deign, O my Savior, to make me a partaker in the graces which thy presence procures, and grant that the union of soul and heart which thou dost allow me to contract with thee may contribute efficaciously to my sanctification, and may make me worthy of that other union with thee which constitutes the supreme happiness of the saints in heaven.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 365.)

SEVENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

VISITS TO THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT.

"Come to me."—St. Matt., xi. 28.

CONSIDERATION.

How many motives we have to go as often as possible to visit our Lord in his sacrament of love, to converse with him, to pay him our homage of adoration, and to solicit the effects of his goodness for ourselves and those who are dear to us.

And what is easier? There are no cherubim here armed with a sword of fire to forbid our access to him. Under the Mosaic law, the high-priest alone entered into the holy of holies and only once a year, under the Christiān law all men can have that advantage, and it at all times. The sovereigns of the earth give audience on certain days: the Master of heaven receives daily whoever wishes to go to him.

Not to visit him—is that not testifying a want of faith or but little love? If a king was going to dwell among poor shepherds, would they leave him a dreary isolation as also we do too frequently in regard to the divine King?

How great is our coldness, says Pére MacCarthy, and our ingratitude, when we leave alone in his temple the

God of goodness who deigns to dwell day and night among us, and who asks us, who urges us to come to him to ask favors from him ! What ! that most amiable Savior in whom the Heavenly Father finds his delight, is pleased to be with us, and we miserable worms of the earth seem to be wearied to stay with him, and to dread the moment when he calls us to him !

How different our conduct is from that of the saints and how opposite their recommendations ! Let us recall to mind for example St. Theresa, St. John Francis Regis, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Magdalen of Pazzi, St. Vincent of Paul, the Blessed Margaret Mary the Blessed Benoit-Joseph. who found, if we may say so, all their joy in the holy tabernacles : their hearts found no repose but at the foot of the altar, where they remained as long as allowed, and which they never left without the desire of returning as soon as possible.

St. Alphonsus Liguori loved in an especial manner to make visits to the Blessed Sacrament : therefore he earnestly recommends that holy and salutary practice and has composed on this subject a sublime little book of devotion in which everything breathes the sweetest perfume of love for the holy Eucharist !

“For a poor prisoner, says he, what a consolation it is to have a faithful friend to converse with, to seek consolation from, to revive his hope, to bring him relief, to assuage his sufferings !” Now, behold our loving friend Jesus who from the tabernacle addresses us in these consoling words : “Behold I am with you all

days, even to the consummation of the world.* I am come from heaven expressly to console you, help you, and deliver you from your exile. Receive me, stay with me, unite yourself to me: you shall be no more bowed down under the weight of your miseries, and at last you will come with me to my kingdom, and I will make you supremely happy."

"The time you pass with devotion 'at the foot of the altar,' says the Blessed Henri Suso, is that in which you will obtain most graces, and from which you will derive most consolation at the hour of death, for there is no place where Jesus Christ more readily hears the prayers of the faithful."

"The human soul, says Mgr. Landnot, needs counsel. It says: "Make the way known to me wherein I should walk."† Let it then go to the foot of the altar. A quarter of an hour's conversation with God who is hidden under the sacramental veils teaches it more in reference to the things of time and eternity, our true destiny, and the course to follow in special difficulties, than the longest reflections and the most skilful combinations of human wisdom. A calm and tranquil light falls upon us, glides gradually into the understanding, and strengthens while enlightening the regions of the heart, and the soul exclaims: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths."‡

"There are no human sufferings," adds the same prelate, "which cannot be soothed by a half hour's visit to the Blessed Sacrament. I know not what takes place

* St. Matt., xxviii. 20. † Ps., cxlii. 8. ‡ Ps., cxviii. 105.

in that mysterious colloquy, I know not what angel's hand dries the tears, what superhuman force is communicated to the soul: but calm succeeds to the tempest, a gentle welcome breeze to the wild lashing of the waves, and every soul that has been submerged in that bath fresh from heaven, comes forth stronger, purer, and more vigorous."

At the foot of the tabernacle, sadness gives place to pure joy, to inexpressible contentment. If David when he looked at the ark of the covenant could not contain his transports of joy, what ought to be the feelings of the pious soul that gazes on the holy tabernacle! Never shall the world know how many tears have been dried, how many sorrows have disappeared, how many despairing hearts have found a solace at the foot of the tabernacle, of that sanctuary where Jesus Christ resides under the veils of his sacrament of love.

Nothing equals the sweetness of the colloquies of the faithful soul with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Oh! with what delight the heart reposes beside the holy tabernacle! It is there as in an oasis in the midst of the desert of this world, where it rests as under the shadow of a thick foliage screened from the heats of day.

What Christian devoted to the holy Eucharist has not experienced this, and has not had reason to cry out: How sweet it is to me, O Jesus, to converse with thee! How enrapturing is thy conversation, O my beloved? My poor heart needs repose, and that repose it finds here below in thee, whilst waiting to possess it in all its fulness in its true country.

APPLICATION.

“As far as our occupations allow, let us go frequently to the foot of the altar to pour forth our soul into the adorable heart of Jesus, to shut ourselves up in that sacred abode where the divine fire of endless love burns day and night. In our sufferings and trials let us go for refuge to that asylum of peace, let us take shelter under the shadow of the tabernacle where dwells our Father, our brother, our friend, the God of the Angels adored by those blessed spirits and faithful Christains.” *

If we cannot go to the church at least let us go thither in thought and affection; let us multiply our visits which, as they testify our piety to Jesus in the most adorable sacrament, make us the objects of his most precious favors.

In our visits to the blessed sacrament, let us always show our respect for the sovereign majesty of God dwelling with us; and yet, let us act toward him with all the simplicity of a child, all the freedom of a friend exposing to him frankly our hopes and fears, speaking to him of our affairs as we would to the dearest of friends, and listening to what he says to us by the impressions of his grace.

Let us make acts of love to him, and beseech him to give us the grace of loving him more and more: for let us never forget that it is the shortest road to perfection and happiness.

* Marie Eustelle.

Ah ! why do we not understand this as did Marie Eustelle, all of whose letters are a hymn of love towards Jesus in the blessed sacrament : What sentiments she writes, ought to animate me during those moments when I am allowed to converse with the Supreme Being, in the company of the heavenly spirits. When near to that great fire of love, should I not be inflamed with the holy odor of charity ! " Go then," says she in another place, ' go to the foot of the altar : there you will find light, strength, the sweetest consolations, and the most perfect peace. Oh ! would that you could pass your days there ! Would that you could there die of love for him whom love holds captive there, and thus ascend from the maternal tabernacle towards the tabernacle of heaven."

PRAYER.

O Jesus ! O incomprehensible love ! since thou art so good as to dwell with us, I make the resolution of frequently visiting thee in thy holy sacrament, and if my soul through tepidity or the embarrassment of baseness should neglect visiting thee, I beseech thee, awaken it from its apathy ; inflame it with a great desire of being in thy holy presence, since that presence is our consolation here below to become our supreme felicity in the world to come.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 366.)

SEVENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

EXPOSITION OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

‘Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace.’—Heb., iv. 16.

CONSIDERATION.

THE Church on certain days and in certain circumstances, exposes the most holy sacrament to the gaze and adoration of the faithful: she places the sacred Host above the tabernacle and invites us to come and pay to it the homage of our piety and love: that is a sacred custom that contains a most instructive lesson, which, whilst it is a most powerful means of bringing down upon earth the blessing of heaven.

By the exposition of the most holy sacrament the Church glorifies the divine body of Jesus Christ: she presents him as being her greatest or rather her only treasure, she pays him a solemn and public homage of adoration; she repairs as far as she can, the outrages alas! so numerous and so great of which she has been and is still the object on the part of the enemies of the faith, and bad Christians.

By her ceremonies and public prayers, by the exhortations of her ministers, by the decoration of her

altars, she does not cease to proclaim the greatness of that sovereign King who placed now on a throne of mercy will one day sit on the clouds of heaven to pronounce sentence for eternity on all mankind.

There is nothing, even to the form and rays of the ostensory but has its meaning for they remind us that Jesus Christ is the Son of justice and of truth, who makes the joy, the beauty, and the life of the soul, and whom his Father has crowned with an infinite glory in heaven.

The Church exposes the holy Sacrament to awaken, reanimate, and inflame the piety of the faithful. Does she not in fact say to them by that holy custom : " Behold the Root of Jesse, the only hope of guilty man, placed now as a sign to the eyes of all nations, come and adore him ! prostrate yourselves before him weep at the remembrance of the offences you have committed against him.

Behold the victim of salvation figured by the brazen serpent by which the Israelites who looked on it were cured. Now, fiery serpents, that is to say, the devil, the world and your passions cause you cruel wounds : come, then, to contemplate with a lively faith, a firm hope and an ardent desire of being saved, the sacred Host elevated before your eyes ; and by his mysterious virtue you will receive the beginning, if not the completion of the cure of your soul.

How could the Christian who knows his spiritual wants, dwell on these thoughts and not feel himself filled with fervor, and impelled to pour forth at the foot of the

altar his whole soul in transports of the most lively most ardent, and most affectionate piety. ?

The Church exposes the holy Sacrament to call to our minds the elevation of Jesus on the cross to transport our thoughts and hearts from the Eucharistic sanctuary to Calvary where he who is the priest and victim of the greater sacrifice of salvation is exposed to the gaze of all.

Is he not in one sense on our altars as on the cross, carrying out the work of our reconciliation, even praying for his enemies, pardoning the repentant, giving us his most holy Mother to be our Mother, burning with thirst for souls, offering for us to his heavenly Father his sufferings and death.

Is not his painful passion reënacted there ? For how many outrages alas ! are heaped on him, and how many new pharisses passing before him shake their heads and blaspheme ? Still, here as there, there are souls who united in disposition with Mary and St. John at the foot of the cross, offer him their homage of profound adoration and console his divine heart by repairing as far as they can the offences offered to his divine heart !

Let us be of the number of those privileged souls, adoring and thanking him, striving to compensate by our piety and love for all that he suffers on the port of men.

The Church exposes the most holy sacrament to win Christians to raise their hearts and thoughts to heaven where Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of his Father and where we hope one day to come through his mediation.

By this holy exercise, she repeats in a manner most calculated to make a deep impression upon us the exhortation she makes during the holy sacrifice : *sursum corda*.

Is it not, as it were, natural to transport our gaze from the throne of love where the divine Lamb is here the object of our worship to that throne of glory where he receives the adorations of the angels and saints, where he shines in all his brightness as the sun of the New Jerusalem, which scatters rays of light and life upon the elect, where he shows himself to their eyes no longer under veils and symbols, but such as he is, that is, in all the brightness of his infinite beauty ?

The Church exposes the holy Sacrament for particular ends, the principal of which are to add to the solemnity of a feast or ceremony, to return thanks to God for some signal gift of his providence, to beg of him the cessation or removal of some calamity, to satisfy his justice and repair the outrages done to his infinite majesty by the sins of men.

We should animate ourselves with the different motives for the exposition we assist at, and according to their nature should produce with true fervor and entire confidence acts of adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and reparation, in conformity with the spirit of the Church, remembering that placed between heaven and earth, Jesus in the holy Sacrament is our means of raising our hearts to heaven and of receiving thence all the graces of which we stand in need, and which we beg from the divine Clemency.

APPLICATION.

To the best of our power let us go and visit the blessed Sacrament on those days when it is exposed to the adoration of the faithful. Let us then above all, make it our happiness to pay our divine Savior our homage of piety and love.

Let us appreciate it as a signal favor, that he is pleased to admit us to his holy presence, for where should we rather be than near his throne of grace, where he hears and receives our supplications to offer them to his Father, where he consoles us, enlightens us, strengthens us, reassures us, encourages us, sustains and strengthens us in the ways of salvation ?

Yes, let us go to him, and there abandon our heart to every impulse of divine love.

Let us contemplate with the most lively affection, the sacred Host which under a veil hides our heavenly friend from our eyes. Let us think on the divine reality it contains. Let us adore, admire and thank Jesus Christ in his sacrament, and make him the entire oblation of our intellect and heart : let us consecrate ourselves to him, glorify him by our every thought, word, sentiment, and action until the close of our lives.

Let us see in him our shelter against the divine justice, and through him let us ask with confidence the mercy of God whom we have offended.

Let us pray according to the intentions of the Church and gladly bring devotion to our aid to obtain the graces

she prays for. Let us pray for those who are dear to us, and especially for our relations, our brothers in religion, our benefactors, and our pupils. Let us pray for ourselves individually, beseeching Our Lord to fulfil in our regard these words which he himself spoke : "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself. * Let us beg him to draw us truly to him by his grace to detach our heart from creatures to unite it to him alone, and to make that union more and more close until it receives its consummation in heaven.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, divine mediator, who art all our hope and all our love, accept our homage of adoration, and deign to place thyself between us and thy heavenly Father to appease his anger, to satisfy his justice, and to beg of him the graces by which alone we can observe his holy law, rise towards him, and attain to the happiness thou hast merited for us.

We ask it through the intercession of Mary, and in the name of the prayer which that most holy Mother offered up to thy Father through thee, at the foot of the cross.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 367.)

* St. John xii. 32.

EIGHTIETH MEDITATION.

BENEDICTION.

"Save, O Lord, thy people, and bless thy inheritance."—Ps., xxvii. 9.

CONSIDERATION.

BENEDICTION of the Blessed Sacrament is an exercise of piety singularly dear to souls devoted to the holy Eucharist. It is, if we may say so, the evening sacrifice to which they hasten, for it seems to them too long to let half a day pass by without paying a public homage to Jesus in his sacrament, and without offering him with the Church their adoration and their prayers.

Let us remark how touching and sublime is that ceremony so fruitful moreover in graces. The people are gathered together near their divine Savior like children around their father who, is about to bless them. They adore him, they praise him, they glorify him, they celebrate his greatness; they manifest by their respectful demeanor and their religious hymns the liveliest faith in his presence in the Blessed Sacrament, the most entire confidence that they will be the objects of his liberality, their love and gratitude towards the hidden God whose love keeps him captive for our sake upon our altars, and makes him so prodigal of his favors.

They have recourse to his spotless Mother the most holy Virgin Mary whose praises they sing, whilst they beg her to aid them by her powerful protection in all their necessities and to intercede for them with Him.

Finally, after having adored anew the Most Blessed Sacrament, and through Jesus our Victim, the most holy and most adorable Trinity, they pray in union with the priest for the Church and his august head, for those who direct or rule them in the spiritual or temporal order: afterwards they prostrate themselves together beneath the hand of our divine Lord, who pours upon their heads humbly bent, the streams of his grace.

It is not with the new Isaac as with the old, who could bless only one of his Children. Jesus Christ blesses us all, in such a way that the favors granted to one cannot possibly injure another as to what he may hope from our Savior's goodness. He blessed the apostles, our eldest brothers in the faith; he blessed those who believed in their teaching and in that of their successors, and now he blesses us, as he will bless those who come after us.

Let us go there with confidence to prostrate ourselves at his feet. Ah! if the blessing of a father or mother brings with it prosperity what will not his blessing do who has infinitely more love for us than the best of fathers and the most affectionate of mothers, and who as absolute Master disposes of all the goods of nature and grace?

No, no, let us not doubt that it is singularly

efficacious in leading our hearts to the love and practice of virtue, keeping far from us the spirits of evil, procuring for us the graces of light and strength of which we stand in need in the work of our sanctification, maintaining and establishing our souls in the interior peace and joy of true servants of God, and making us crave on with fruit the important mission over children and youths with which we have been entrusted.

Let us receive it in sentiments of true piety, and for that end let us recall to mind while assisting at benediction, one or other of the blessings given by our Lord, and made known to us in the holy Gospel.

The first is that of little children * whom the apostles wished to keep at a distance from him, and in whose regard he spoke these words of divine tenderness and sublime teaching : “Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not ; for of such is the Kingdom of heaven :” he wished that they should come to him, and then says the Evangelist, “laying his hands upon them, he blessed them.”

Let us go to him like children, that is to say with humility, simplicity, uprightness, and distrust of ourselves : let us lay before him the wants of our soul such as they are, and let us beg him to provide for them by his goodness.

But let us not think merely on ourselves. Let us remember the children it is our duty to guide, and let us offer them to him, begging him to look upon them in

* St. Mark x. 14.

pity, to bless them, to give them in superabundance the grace they stand in need of, to enter resolutely on and to persevere to death in the practice of virtue.

The second blessing of Jesus Christ mentioned in the holy Gospel is that given to the apostles and diciples at the moment of his ascension into heaven : “He led them out as far as Bethania, ‘says St. Luke,’ and lifting up his hands he blessed them, and it came to pass, whilst he blessed them, that he departed from them, and was carried up to heaven.” *

Let us be in thought, in the midst of the apostles and disciples, and like them let us adore him while blessing the whole Church in their persons. Let us beseech him that his blessing wrought in us what it wrought in the apostles and disciples, may fill us with the spirit of piety, may procure us the assistance of the Holy Ghost, may reanimate our zeal for the salvation of souls, and may make us produce fruits of sanctity that may merit to raise us with him and through him to heaven.

The Gospel speaks to us of a third blessing of Jesus Christ, that, namely, which he will give his elect at the end of the world, when he will say to them : “Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink.† . .

Happy, infinitely happy are those whom he will thus address. Ah ! let us beg of him that we may be among the number. Let us beg of him with all the fervor of

* St. Luke, xxiv. 50, 51. † St. Matt., xxv. 34, 35.

our soul that the blessing he gives us from his holy altar may be to us the pledge and first fruits of that last blessing which will place his faithful servants in the perfect and eternal possession of the happiness of heaven.

APPLICATION.

Penetrated with those thoughts, let us assist at Benediction with a lively faith, as if with our bodily eyes we saw Jesus Christ stretched forth his hands over us and bless us. Let us keep ourselves recollected in his presence and not cease to offer him our advantages and our prayers.

Let us excite in our hearts the most perfect confidence remembering that He whose benediction we receive has all power in heaven and earth; that he delights to favor us with his gifts; that he communicates to us superabundantly the graces most capable of making us surmount temptations, and escape from all the snares of the devil.

Let us praise his goodness; let us testify the most lively and affectionate gratitude: let us admire the inventions of his heart always anxious to pour upon us the treasure it contains, and amongst others this which is to faithful souls the source of so many blessings.

Let us respond to his love for us by the greatest love for him, consecrating to him our heart with all its perfections, testifying to him that we belong to him alone, and that we wish only the perfect accomplishment of his most holy and most adorable will.

Let us destroy all that could be an obstacle to the liberality he wishes to exercise towards us, that is to say, pride, attachment to creatures, spiritual sloth, an unspiritualized life &c. Let our souls be free from every ill regulated affection and he will fill it with himself; let it be resolved to profit by his gifts and he will be lavish of them.

Let us put ourselves in these dispositions and while praying to him for ourselves, relations, our brothers in religion, and our pupils, let us say to him with the royal prophet. "O Lord, save thy people, and thy inheritance."

PRAAYER.

I adore thee in thy Sacraement, O Jesus, eternal love and source of all graces. And I beseech thee to cast upon thy children prostrate before thee a look of mercy. See O Lord, how great is our poverty, and deign to help us.

Bless us in our thoughts, our sentiments, our words, and actions: bless us in our superiors, our relations, our brothers, our pupils! bless us in our labors, our trials our maladies. . . . Grant by thy grace that doing what thou requirest of us we may become worthy to be the object of the blessing by which thou wilt call thy elect to the kingdom of thy Father. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 367.)

EIGHTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

REPARATION.

“He was in the world, and the world knew him not.”—St. John, 1. 10.

CONSIDERATION.

The world does not know Jesus Christ, and instead of adoring him, of receiving his divine teachings with docility, of profiting by the gifts of his grace, it disdaines despises, outrages, and crucifies him. During his mortal life, that divine Savior was contradicted, persecuted, blasphemed, betrayed, condemned, and finally delivered up to a most shameful and ignominious of punishments, and that in spite of his numberless benefits, or rather by reason of his benefits.

Alas! is he not still treated in the same way in his sacrament of love? Is not his Eucharistic life, his passion reproduced, continued, become permanent and universal? Is there no relation between the tabernacle and Calvary; and here, as there, does he not present his cheeks to be buffeted, and his body to be scourged.

Infidels, heretics, and wicked men blaspheme him in the most outrageous manner. “They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent, the venom of asps is

under their lips,"* they have made the adorable Eucharist the object of their disdain and raillery.

To words they have added writings; their pen has been subservient to their spirit of malice in depriving souls of faith and love. Oh! who can tell the number of works which, dictated by the prince of darkness, have the effect of keeping men away from the Eucharistic banquet, and leading them to offend Jesus Christ in the greatest proof of his love for men?

To discourses and writings the enemies of religion have added profanation. And here what a desolating picture meets our sight! Through hatred of this sacrament of love, they have frequently slain priests, broken open tabernacles, overturned the altars, left churches in ruins and sold the sacred vessels. They have laid sacrilegious hands on the adorable host, they have trampled it under foot, they have thrown the body of Jesus Christ that object worthy of the adoration of heaven and earth into water, into fire, and into dirt!

What sacrileges! How the remembrance of them ought to penetrate us with grief, and make us say with St Liguori: "Why can I not bathe with my tears and even with my blood, O most sweet Jesus, the places where your love has been so grievously offended?"

Not only does Jesus in his Eucharistic life suffer from his enemies but he also suffers from Christians. From the altar he can show us the deepest wounds of his heart, and say: "With these I was wounded in the house of those that loved me."†

* Ps., cxxxix. 4.

† Zach., xii. 6.

The greatest and deepest wound is that made by sacrilegious communions. Oh! how his heart is torn with grief, when new Judases come to give him the traitors kiss, to deliver him up to his enemies, to place him under the feet of Satan ruling in their hearts!

How greatly also is he grieved by the irreverence of so many Christians who seem to come to church only to disown his presence, and by the evil dispositions and indifference of so many others who refuse to respond to the advances of his love!

He invites all men to the divine banquet and the greatest number refuse to come. Some outrage his servants who invite them in his name, and others excuse themselves under pretext of their business or their pleasure. Multitudes pass before the banquet hall where the holy table is prepared, without even casting an eye upon it, without thinking that their place is empty. Some keep at a distance from it because having become slaves to their senses, they do not believe in the chaste delights of the holy Eucharist, or do not wish to correct what prevents them from approaching to; it others remain away, because they are under the dominion of a slavish fear which displeases the heart of Jesus, perhaps as much as indifference for this sacrament of love.

Some there are who shun the holy table through human respect; they are ashamed to be objects of the favors of the King of heaven: what inconceivable folly! . . . Sometimes also it happens that the very dying refuse to receive the Savior who has made him-

self our viaticum, and who came to them to bring them pardon and infinite happiness.

What a fresh source of grief to the heart of Jesus is the desolation of the Churches wherein he resides ! Is he not there as in a solitude, and do we not see the words of Jeremias fulfilled : “ the ways of Sion mourn, because there are none that come to the solemn feast ”* ? In how many cities are the Churches deserted, while the multitude crowd the squares, the promenades, the theatres, and the palaces of the great !

What a disgrace ! And how can we think of it without shedding abundant tears, as did Father Balthazar Alvarez, and so many other servants of God, devoted like him to the worship of the holy sacrament !

Were the souls at least that make profession of belonging wholly to Jesus Christ a consolation to him by their piety ! Ah ! doubtless, many respond to his love by true love ; but how many have only coldness for him, their hearts seeming like ice in his presence !

“ Jesus so good, ” says the pious Marie Eustelle, ‘ is almost universally unknown. It is so, also, of many who are consecrated to him. Oh ! how much reason they have to weep ! To a soul that loves Jesus, such a sight is well calculated to overwhelm it with grief. How the divine heart of Jesus suffers from the indifference of the children he loves, and for whom he offers a million times daily, his blood and his life ! What reason then we have to love more and more that

* Lament., 1. 4.

affectionate Master, so as to make amends for the forgetfulness and coldness of Christians in our days!"

APPLICATION.

Let us be penetrated with holy sadness, at the remembrance of the offences of man towards the adorable Eucharist. Prostrate between the porch and the altar, let us deplore the sacrileges committed in the church, and implore God's mercy. Let us shed our tears in presence of God dwelling with us, and whose love is so shamefully outraged. Like the Blessed Margaret Mary, let us weep at the thought, that Jesus is so little loved, so little desired in his sacrament.

True love strives to compensate the injustice suffered by the object beloved: let us then show that we have a true love for Jesus Christ. Let us adore him with all the powers of our being, let us accept with resignation the sufferings of life and of our condition, and let us offer them to him with the intention of repairing the outrages he receives from men in his sacrament: with a view to the same end, let us practice every day some act of mortification unknown and exterior.

Let us offer him in reparation the homage paid him by the just on earth, and the by saints and angels: let us offer him above all, the homage paid him by Mary at the foot of the Cross. Yes, let us unite with Mary's reparation, and through her, our adorations and expiations will surely reach him:

Let us be wholly devoted to the worship of Jesus in

the holy Eucharist. Let us have nothing more at heart than to propagate, excite, and reanimate that devotion, the chief in excellence and the fruits of salvation. Let us seize with happiness every opportunity of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and of raising the hearts of others towards him.

Let us in season and out of season instruct the souls confided to us as to the worship they ought to pay him, and let us repeat to them in sentiments of the most intimate conviction these words of the Apocalypse : “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction.” *

PRAYER.

O Jesus, unknown love, divine Savior, who continuest in thy Sacrament thy painful passion, behold us at thy feet to make these amends for all the outrages of men, so many of whom alas ! have answered thy kindness only by black ingratitude. Ah ! why can we not present thee a worthy homage to console and rejoice thy heart !

O Lord Jesus, we offer thee for that end all the sentiments of compassion, adoration, and love with which thy divine Mother was penetrated at the foot of the Cross, and we beg of thee by her intercession, the grace to glorify thee on earth by our piety and zeal, so as to merit to go and glorify thee in heaven. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 368.)

* Apoc., v. 12.

EIGHTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

"I will walk among you, and will be your God."—Levit.,
xxvi. 21.

CONSIDERATION.

THE Church displays on this day all the magnificence of her worship, and invites her children to lend her their assistance to add to the splendor of her pomps, and the beauty of her ceremonial. It is because she celebrates the institution of the adorable sacrament which is her strength, her glory, her life, and by which God himself dwells with us, sacrifices himself for us, and gives himself to us.

"Let us celebrate,' says she to us, 'with hymns of joy this august solemnity; let our songs proceed from the depth of our hearts. This feast recalls that night and that last supper when our Savior took the pasch with his disciples, according to the law prescribed to their Fathers. The repast being ended, and after having eaten the figurative Lamb, to give them his body with his own hands, and as we believe gave him wholly to all, and wholly to each of them.'"

It is true that in the Mass of Holy Thursday the

* Hymn *Sacris Solemniis*.

Church makes special commemoration of the institution of the holy Eucharist; but she could not at that time, consecrated to honoring above all the passion of her divine Spouse, give herself up to joy, a feeling most proper when referring to this great Sacrament. ‘Therefore,’ says St. Thomas, ‘she has piously established, through Pope Urban IV, that a solemn commemoration should be made thereof on the first Thursday after the octave of Pentecost, at that time when the Holy Ghost instructed the hearts of the disciples, and the sacred table began to be frequented by the faithful.’

The Church by the nature and solemnity of her service and processions, wishes to make amends this day to our Blessed Lord, as far as in her power, for all the outrages of which he was the object on the part of Jesus at Jerusalem, as well as of heretics and bad Christians, in all ages.

How great is the homage she pays him! ‘Praise your Savior, O Sion,’ she exclaims, ‘praise your leader and shepherd by hymns and canticles. Publish his glory as far as you can: you will never be able to praise him enough, for he is above all praise.’ *

To-day, the doors of the Churches are opened to allow the Sovereign King to pass through. His path is strewed with leaves and flowers; welcoming tokens are hung from every window; altars gaily adorned and triumphal arches are raised at convenient distances. The march of the divine conqueror is a glorious triumphal, but as calm and peaceable as that of the most gentle of

* *Lauda Sion.*

shepherds, the best beloved of Fathers. What is strongest binds with what is mildest to glorify him who is both the lion of the tribe of Juda and the divine Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world.

This is a reparation for the ignominious journey he made at Jerusalem on the day of his passion. When delivered up into the hands of the wicked, he was bound, cruelly beaten, dragged from tribunal to tribunal, and finally to death. This day, he is brought with reverence from altar to altar, and proclaimed "the New King, the eternal Priest, the Ruler of nations, the Lord of all things, and the Victim of Salvation."* Adored by the great ones of earth, and by the poor he is hailed as the conqueror of hell, and Savior of the human race.

Impiety has blasphemously denied his presence in the holy Eucharist, and demanded of Christians: "where is your God?"† But to-day especially the Church covers them with confession, and addressing her divine Spouse says to him: "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place; thou and the ark which thou hast sanctified;‡" "that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."§

"It is," says the sacred council of Trent, "a custom most holy and most piously introduced into the Church, to appoint every year a certain day and a special feast for honoring this august and adorable sacrament with particular veneration and solemnity, and to bear it in procession with respect and pomp through the streets

* Office of the day. † Ps., xli. 4. ‡ Ps., cxxxii. 8.

§ 1 Kings xvii. 46.

and public squares so that all Christians may be able, by some solemn and extraordinary demonstration of respect, to testify this gratitude to their divine Master and Redeemer for so signal a favor.

“And moreover it is necessary that victorious truth should trample in its way over lies and heresy, so that its adversaries at the sight of so great a demonstration, and in the midst of the universal joy of the Church may lose all courage and wither with vexation, or touched with shame and confusion may come to own their faults and be converted.”

Let us enter into the intentions of this good Mother. Let us give glory to Jesus Christ by our homage of piety, love and gratitude. Let us offer him as far as depends on us, a worthy reparation for all the offences of men against his Sovereign Majesty.

Let us extol his goodness, his mercy and his liberality: Is not that the sure means of experiencing their effects? Jesus Christ, says the acts of the apostles, “went about doing good,” § it is also in doing good that he passes through the streets of Christian cities. Happy then are those who will kneel down with faith, respect, and confidence, as he passes along! Happy they who will beg of him to bless them! Happy they, who from pure motives, may have contributed to the pomp of his peaceful and glorious triumph! No, no, nothing is done for this divine master that is not rewarded a hundred fold.

The Church which offers us in this solemnity a pre-

§ Acts, x. 38.

cious opportunity of enriching ourselves for heaven, gives us moreover admirable lessons, for or how many ways does she proclaim that the body of Jesus Christ is worthy of all the adoration of them and angels; that the Savior God is the Master of all things; that the holy Eucharist is a gift above all praise? Does she not also tell us by the procession to which she invites us, that we are in this world but pilgrims who under the banner of religion direct our course towards heaven in company with Him, who alone can bring us thither; that the union with the divine Mediator makes our defense and our glory, and will be our title of admission into the holy temple of the heavenly Jerusalem?

APPLICATION.

Let us assist with a spirit of faith and piety at the ceremonies of this great day. Let us contemplate in the sacred Host the eternal Priest, the Son of justice, the King of kings, Him of whom the prophet has said: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated: and his train filled the temple. Upon it stood the Seraphim And they cried one to another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts; all the earth is full of his glory."*

Let us put all our confidence in him remembering that he is the victorious Lamb who holds the infernal serpent enchain'd and whose looks terrify his invisible enemies. Let our confidence be unlimited, for we have with us Him who makes all the riches of heaven, and

* Isa., vi. 3.

who places his happiness in pouring upon us his inestimable treasures. Let us rekindle our love towards him, and offer to that infinitely amiable Savior the homage of all our affections.

Let us with the Church give ourselves up to holy joy, and celebrate the charity and tenderness of the divine Shepherd who visits us. Let us tell him of all our gratitude for his gifts, but above all for that of the adorable Sacrament whose institution this feast celebrates.

Let us take part in the procession, as religious ought to do, and let us be there, a real edification to the faithful, so that fulfilling what our good Saviour expects of our piety, we may merit to be enriched with his blessings in this life, and to glorify him with those blessed of his Father, in a happy eternity.

PRAYER.

I adore thee in thy Sacrament, O Jesus, as the Angels in heaven adore thee therein, and like them I rejoice in thy triumph. Deign, O divine King, on this great day of thy mercies, to favor me with thy graces, so that walking in thy steps and following to the end the path thou hast trodden, I may come to the abode of happiness which is its end, there to celebrate in the company of thy saints thy infinite greatness.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 366.)

THE END.

MEDITATIONS ON THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

BY
BROTHER PHILIPPE,
SUPERIOR-GENERAL OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

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*Translated from the French.*  
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MEDITATIONS

ON THE

SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

FIRST MEDITATION.

ORIGIN OF DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

“I am come to send fire on the earth.”—St. Luke xii. 49.

CONSIDERATION.

CONSIDERED in its essence, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is as old as the Church, although it has received its special form only in our times. Have there not always been in the Church, Christians who have studied, admired, and adored, the heart of our Savior, who have given him love for love, who have blessed and extolled him for his goodness and his perfections, and who, by their homage of piety, have striven to make amends for the outrages he receives on the part of men?

Has not that been the case from the day of the Incarnation, when the glorious Virgin Mary, who, more than any other creature, understood the immensity of the love with which the Son of God lowered himself to our nothingness, and who blessed, adored, and honored, in the most sublime manner, the divine heart, the seat of that love ? Did not St. Joseph, from the moment that he learned the mystery of the Son of God made man, do so likewise. ?

What a worship of love, gratitude, and adoration, was paid to the Sacred Heart by St. John the Evangelist reposing at the last supper on the breast of Jesus, or contemplating, through the wound of the side of the adorable Victim, that divine heart pierced by a lance ; by St. Peter when he said thrice "Lord thou knowest that I love thee" * thus atoning for his having thrice denied him ; by St. Magdalen when her love obtained her pardon, or when mingling her tears with the blood of expiation which streamed down the cross ; and by St. Paul when he exclaimed : "The charity of Christ presseth us :" † "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maran-atha." ‡

So it was also with St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Francis of Assisium, St. Bonaventure, St Theresa, St. Gertrude, St. Melchtilde, St. Francis of Sales. . . . or rather with a multitude of seraphic souls in all ages of the Church, and of all conditions.

How many had the secret of devotion to the Sacred

* St. John xxi. 15, 16, 17.

† 2 Cor., v. 14.

‡ 1 Cor., xvi. 22.

heart before it was revealed to the Church in general!

. . . As the sun, before shining on the plains and villages, gilds the summits of the mountains, so the divine heart manifested itself to those privileged before shedding his rays of light and life upon all the faithful.

When that period of grace had arrived, Our Lord wished to make use of, for the accomplishment of his designs, a humble nun of the order of the Visitation, named Margaret Mary, residing in the Convent of Paray-le-Monial, who, a perfect model of piety, purity, charity, and the spirit of sacrifice, has to the joy of the Church been recently raised to the altar.

For a long time God prepared her for the revelation he wished to make to her, appearing to her sensibly and instructing her gradually in the mission he wished her to fulfil. One day in the year 1674, as she was in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, he discovered to her the wonders of her love and the inexpressible secrets of his Sacred Heart, which he had concealed up till then. "My Divine Heart," said he to her, "is so filled with love for men, that not being able to contain, any longer within itself, the flames of burning charity, it needs to scatter them through your instrumentality, and to manifest itself to them, to enrich them with the treasures it contains. I discover to you the value of those treasures: they contain the graces of sanctification and salvation, necessary to draw men from the abyss of perdition."

Another time, she saw his heart radiant with flames, crowned with thorns, surmounted by a cross, and bear-

ing the mark of the wound that the lance had made, and he said that he would take a singular pleasure in seeing his sentiments honored under the figure of that heart of flesh, whose image he wished exposed to the eyes of men, so as thereby to lock their hearts so insensible, alas ! to his advances. He promised that he would heap graces on those that so honored him, and he added that this devotion was, as it were, a last effort of his love in favor of Christians of these latter ages, and to lead them to truly love him.

Our Lord afterwards commanded the Blessed Margaret Mary to communicate on the first Friday of the month : but that was not but the prelude, if we may say so, to the revelation he wished to make to her.

On one of the days within the Octave of Corpus Christi (1675) he showed her his divine heart again, and said to her : "Behold that heart which so loved men, and which spared nothing for their sake, so as to burn to testify its love for them ; and instead of being grateful, the majority do not cease to outrage me by their irreverences and sacrileges, by the coldness and contempt they have for me in the sacrament of my love."

He manifested to her afterwards his wish that the first Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi should be dedicated by a special feast to honoring that heart whose love is so little known, requesting that on that day the faithful should, by holy communion and acts of reparation, make amends for the indignities and offences committed against him, during the whole time that he

has been exposed upon the altars. "I promised you," added he, "that my heart will expand to pour forth the influence of its divine love on those who will pay it that honor, or who will help to make others pay it."

The humble nun excusing herself on account of her unworthiness, Our Lord acquainted her with all she had to do in execution of his design, which, through the ministry of Pere de la Colombiere, soon began to find its accomplishment.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart was in the beginning received by only a small number of chosen souls: but in spite of the contradictions of men, it did not cease to extend. In 1765, Clement XIII, at the request of the Episcopacy of Poland, issued the memorable decree which gave it apostolic sanction, and in 1857, at the request of the French Episcopacy the feast of the Sacred Heart was declared an integral part of the Catholic liturgy.

Thus the fire of divine love passed gradually on, and has gained parishes, dioceses, and empires; the call of our divine Lord has been heard; the worship of his divine heart is to-day universally practiced, and produces in the whole Church abundant fruits of sanctification.

APPLICATION.

In calling to mind the origin and propagation of devotion to the Sacred Heart, let us give our souls up to holy joy and the most entire confidence, for by this holy worship Jesus Christ opens to men the treasures of

his grace, and works an admirable change in souls whose every aspiration he turns towards the uncreated love.

Let us thank him that he thus heaps his favors upon us. Let us admire his love which chose to communicate itself to earth by the ministry of a humble Virgin, whom he made acquainted with his designs.

Let us honor that holy religious who was, in this circumstance, the instrument of his mercies. The Church decrees to her a public worship: Oh! how sweet it ought to be to all who are devoted to the Sacred Heart to join therein, to give honor to that worthy daughter of St. Francis of Sales, to place themselves under her protection, to beg her to obtain for us the grace of loving Jesus as she loved him!

Let us enter into the spirit of devotion to the Sacred Heart, and as far as we can in our state, let us embrace with pleasure its salutary practices. Let everything in us, thoughts, words, and works, testify that our soul is truly penetrated with love and gratitude for Jesus Christ; and that it ardently desires, as far as it can, to repair the offences offered to him in his sacrament of love.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, how great thou art in the miracles of thy power, how admirable in the designs of thy wisdom, how amiable in the outpourings of thy goodness! Be thou thanked O divine Savior, for communicating to us the treasures of thy heart, and grant us the grace to

profit by them according to the full extent of thy merciful designs, so that, having worthily honored thy love during our whole lives, we may have the grace to die in a transport of love, which may open for our soul the happy home of eternal love. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 369.)

SECOND MEDITATION.

NATURE OF DEVOTION TO THE SACRED
HEART.

"God is Charity."—1 St. John iv. 16.

CONSIDERATION.

DEVOTION to the Sacred Heart consists in honoring, with a worship of adoration, love, gratitude, imitation, and reparation, the heart of Jesus, which, united hypostatically to the Word, is the heart of God, the source and fulness of graces, the perfect model of all virtues; and whose goodness, greatness, amiability, and generosity are alas! unrecognized on the part of men.

This devotion, like that of the words of the cross, the sacred lance, the crown of thorns, and a multitude of others, has a double object: the one sensible and material, able to be perceived by the senses, or represented by the imagination; the other wholly spiritual, but having the closest relations with it.

The sensible object is that heart, which living and animated was the organ of the feelings of our divine Savior, and which reminds us of them, as being their most direct, truest, and most expressive symbol. The

spiritual object consists in those very feelings, the interior dispositions of Jesus Christ ! his love for his Father, his love and tenderness for men, his joy, his sorrows, his wishes.

The Blessed Margaret Mary gives us to understand and distinguish this double object, when she says : "The divine Master assured me that he felt singular pleasure in seeing the sentiments and love of his heart honored under the emblem of a heart of flesh, as he had shown me."

The Church speaks in the same way in her office, where we read : "The Sovereign Pontiff, Clement XIII, has authorised the feast of the Sacred Heart, so that the faithful may, under that symbol, celebrate with more devotion and fervor, the charity of Jesus Christ suffering and dying for the salvation of the human race, and instituting, in memory of his death, the sacrament of his body and his blood. While giving glory to the Sacred Heart of Jesus we celebrate the memory of the principal favors of his love towards us."

Let us admire here the simplicity and fitness of the means Jesus Christ has wished to make choice of. The heart is in fact the most natural emblem of love, goodness, and whatever there is of great, generous, and heroic in the soul : moreover, it receives the impression of all the feelings we experience. What Christian, then, could by meditation place himself in presence of the heart of Jesus Christ without recalling the sentiments of charity, tenderness, and compassion, with which that divine Savior was filled ?

"The heart of Jesus," says Père Gautrelet, "represents, and reminds us of the sacred humanity, whose noblest organ it was, and the divine pardon which penetrated it, raised it to the dignity of a divine heart, and imprinted the seal of divinity on all its movements and sentiments; the honor paid to Jesus Christ can be formalised in that we pay to his adorable heart."

The end of devotion to the Sacred Heart, is to acknowledge, in a worthy manner, the love of Jesus for us; it is therefore to imitate the virtues of which he gives us an example to repair the crimes and ingratitude of men towards him, particularly in the adorable Eucharist.

What Christian would not strive to realize that sublime end! Ah! how can we think of the wonders and the excess of the charity of the Son of God; how can we recall to mind that that love was the cause of the humiliations of his Incarnation, the labors of his life, the gift which he has given us of himself in his sacrament, the sacrifice he consummated on Calvary, and not be drawn to love him with the greatest love!

All that is brought before us by devotion to the Sacred Heart. Therefore, whoever embraces it in spirit and practice, cannot but share the sentiments of St. Liguori who exclaimed: "O all amiable heart of my Jesus, heart worthy to possess all hearts, heart resplendent with the flames of the purest love! O consuming fire, consume all my being, and give me a new life, a life of grace, a life of love."

The soul devout to the Sacred Heart, strives to re-

produce in itself the feelings of Jesus Christ, to imitate his charity, his goodness, his sweetness, his humility, his self-denial, his patience, his compassion for the unfortunate, and his liberality. . . It thus rises to whatever the morality of the gospel has of great, holy, and elevated: it wishes to resemble its divine Master in its heart, and that is all its ambition.

It is grieved that Jesus' love is not known; it hears that sweet Savior say to it, as to the Blessed Margaret Mary: "If men returned my love, I would count as little what I have suffered for them. But they have nothing but coldness and repulses for all my eagerness to do them good. At least give me the pleasure of supplying their ingratitude as far as in your power."

It gladly responds to all his designs, offering up prayers of praise and reparation, expressing its love to him, thanking him for his favors, proclaiming on every occasion his adorable perfections, leading hearts to love him sincerely and without a rival, paying him all the homage of a most affectionate piety in the divine Sacrament of the altar, assisting with fervor at the holy sacrifice, and communicating as often as obedience allows.

Jesus Christ rewards it by pouring upon it, according to his promise, the influence of his love, the treasures of his mercy, the most precious and most numerous graces of sanctification and salvation.

APPLICATION.

Let us enter into the spirit and practice of this admirable devotion so dear to all the servants of Jesus Christ.

“Let us love that sweet Savior,” says Blessed Margaret Mary, “let us love him without reserve : let us give all, sacrifice all for that happiness, and possessing his adorable heart we shall possess all good things.” Let us not forget, that, devotion to the Sacred Heart is the very essence of devotion which, says St Liguori, “is the worship of love for Jesus Christ.” Let us study to keep alive, and increase in our souls that sacred fire which the Son of God came to bring upon earth, and with which he so ardently desires that all hearts should be inflamed. Let us respond by a reciprocal love to the love of Jesus for us, and according to the expression of St. Magdalen of Pazzi, “let us love love.”

Let us study, admire, adore his sacred heart which is the throne of grace, the treasury of heavenly treasures, the collection of all perfections.

Let us propose to ourselves henceforth to form our heart on that adorable model, and for that purpose let us take from it every sentiment contrary to charity, sweetness, humility. . . . Like the heart of Jesus, let us grieve over every offence against God : let us weep over the misery of sinners, and do all in our power to bring them back to virtue.

Let us be zealous in making the heart of Jesus known, admired, adored and invoked, and instilling of those

under us or over whom we have any influence, the practices of that worship of love and reparation which is the source of so many graces.

Ah ! the remembrance of the outrages offered to Jesus Christ in the adorable Eucharist ! let us give ourselves up to a holy sadness ; let us grieve that his love is so little known, and let us offer ourselves to him to be victims of reparation, in union with his most holy Mother glorifying him on Calvary, or at the foot of the altar, and making amends thereby for the offences of men against him.

Let us be animated with a true spirit of penance and piety, and thus be a consolation to the divine heart whose riches will be communicated to us abundantly on this earth, until we enjoy them in their fulness in heaven.

PRAYER.

“O divine heart of Jesus, sacred furnace of eternal love, my asylum, my repose, and my hope, I love thee with all my soul. Oh ! grant that I may know thee better, so that I may love thee more and more.”*

Penetrate my heart with the fires that burn thee, inflame it with the pure flames of thy charity, so that loving in this life only thee, and for thee, I may merit to love thee in heaven, where that love constitutes perfect happiness. Amen

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 369.)

* Marie Eustelle.

THIRD MEDITATION.

EXCELLENCE OF DEVOTION TO THE SACRED
HEART.

"If thou didst know the gift of God."—St. John, iv. 10.

CONSIDERATION.

DEVOTION to the Sacred Heart is all we can imagine of great, noble, elevated, profitable, and deserving of esteem. It is an institution truly divine, under whatever point of view we consider it, and evidently fruitful in every kind of grace and virtue.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is divine in its origin, for it is Jesus Christ who revealed it directly to the holy man by whose ministry he wished it to be made known to the faithful, and who by his providence has disposed everything that it may be established and propagated in the Christian world, in spite of the numberless obstacles which false prejudices, indifference, impiety, and heresy, raised against it.

This devotion is not only conformable to the spirit of the Church, but it is, as it were, a sublime abridgment of the Christian religion, of that law of fear, of that worship of adoration, thanksgiving, expiation, and

prayer, which faithful Christians render to the Father through the mediation of thy Son. In fact, it has love for its beginning, love for its essential practice, and love for its end ; it is the practice of the love of Jesus Christ for us, and our study to give glory to our divine Savior by a reciprocal love. It is for us the most direct and the surest means of making our homage of piety acceptable to our heavenly Father, since by it we make it pass through the very heart of his well-beloved Son.

It causes us to make admirable progress in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, by giving us to understand these words of St. John: "God is charity,"* and these others of St. Paul: "the Son of God . . . loved me, and delivered himself for me."†

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is divine in its object whether sensible or spiritual. Let us remember that it refers to the heart of Him who is our Lord and our God, to that heart which united hypostatically to the word, is truly divine, and merits all the adoration of heaven and earth, to that heart which was the beginning of the life of Jesus Christ and the organ of his feelings, to that heart which is to us the truest, the most loving symbol of love, tenderness, compassion, or rather of all the sentiments of Jesus Christ and which, by recalling these to mind, recalls to mind also the actions which they made him perform, and above all, his sacrifice on Calvary, and the institution of the sacrament of his love.

Ah ! if we venerate, and with so much reason, the

* 1 St. John iv. 8.

† Gal., ii. 20.

the wood of the cross, the crown of thorns, the holy sepulchre . . . everything connected with the work of our Redemption, or which is a proof of the love of Jesus Christ for us, what honor does that adorable heart deserve which suffered all the sufferings, all the griefs of the divine Victim, and which speaks to us more eloquently than any thing else of the love of our Savior.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart has direct reference to that charity itself, to that love which exhausts the admiration of the Cherubim and seraphim, and which will be through eternity the subject of their praise to that love which made the Son of God descend to our nothingness, having come to save us from death and hell, and which brought him to the altar of his sacrifice, where he shed even the last drop of his blood, to that love which made him institute the divine Sacrament by which he dwells with us, renews his sacrifice, becomes our food, and gives us everything in giving us himself.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart does not appear less admirable and sublime when seen in its effects, for, according to the very words of Jesus Christ, it is a devotion which is one of the most real, and most calculated to lead the faithful to correct their failings; to make them triumph over the strongest temptations; to develop in their souls true love for God, to lead them, in a short time and easily, to true perfection.

Those who practice it, detach their affections more and more from creatures to fix them on Jesus alone, to

whom they say like St. Liguori: "O Lord who art my treasure and my all, banish from my heart every desire that displeases thee, and from my mind every thought that does not tend to thee. Attach me so well to thy heart, that I may never be able to become separated from it. I love thee with all my soul, and with all my affections, and I beg of thee, O sweet Savior to give me still more love, still more desire to please thee. Would that to the end of my days I might think only of thee, sigh only for thee, desire and seek nothing but thee."

This holy worship meets admirably the wants of society whose greatest wounds are egotism, cupidity, sensualism, religious indifference, and profane love! To each of these it is a salutary balm which heals them by going to their very source.

Wickedness exists in the heart: the Sovereign Good is either not loved or little loved, and consequently, the affections are turned towards creatures.

Now, devotion to the Sacred Heart in making us attentive to the love of God for us, in making us study and admire the tenderness and goodness of Jesus Christ, fills our hearts with the fires of divine charity, penetrates them with that pure and generous love which excludes egotism, cupidity, and sensuality; which delivers us from the thirst after riches, and which substitutes, for the love of pleasures, the love of suffering through the desire of being like to him who was called the Man of Sorrows. Therefore our holy Father Pius IX, has said: "Society as it exists cannot be saved but through

the Sacred Heart," and a learned prelate Mgr. Pie has written: "The worship of the Sacred Heart was reserved for these later ages as a pledge of divine love which wishes to manifest by still greater acts of affection, as the world draws near its close. That worship is the buckler of faith, and the food of piety in the midst of the sorrows and disorders of this age."

APPLICATION.

Let us, with our whole souls, love devotion to the Sacred Heart and manifest this on every occasion. Let us often reflect on its origin, its spirit, its practices, and its efficacy. Let us rejoice and thank our Lord for its establishment and propagation in the Church, saying with the Blessed Margaret Mary: "Oh! what joy to me that the heart of my divine Master is known, loved, and honored! Yes, it is the greatest consolation I can receive in my life, to see him reign everywhere."

Let us thank our Lord for all the graces of which devotion to his Sacred Heart has been the source, either for ourselves or our neighbor; and that we may partake of them in the greatest abundance, let us embrace with fervor its holy practices.

Let us contemplate and adore the Sacred Heart, let us study, admire, and strive to imitate the sentiments of which it has been the organ, and of which it is the most touching emblem. Let us be entirely devoted to the worship of the most holy Sacrament.

Let us strive to repair, by our homages of piety, and

acts of reparation, the outrages offered to the adorable Emmanuel whom love holds a prisoner in our tabernacles: let us frequently communicate with this intention, and especially on the Festival of the Sacred Heart, and on the first Friday of each month.

Let us bring to the heart of Jesus the souls entrusted to us; let us train them up to that devotion which, while filling them with love for our divine Savior, will raise them up to the things of heaven, will give them a relish for piety; will develop in them the most noble and most religious sentiments, and will be to them the greatest assistance against actual dangers, and against those that await them in the world.

PRAYER.

O heart of Jesus, may my heart be the altar of thy love, may my tongue proclaim thy goodness, may my eyes be unceasingly fixed on thy wound, may my mind meditate on thy divine perfections, may my memory always preserve the precious remembrance of thy mercies.

Yes, I consecrate myself to thy worship, and I offer thee my thoughts, my desires, my liberty, my will, my life, all that I have, and all that I am. I give myself to thee for ever, beseeching thee through the most holy heart of Mary, to accept me as thy servant, and to give me the grace of living only for thee on earth, so as to merit to live in thee in heaven.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 370.)

FOURTH MEDITATION.

ADVANTAGES AND FRUITS OF DEVOTION TO
THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

"The kingdom of God is like unto a treasure hidden in a field."—St. Matt., xiii. 44.

CONSIDERATION.

DEVOTION to the Sacred Heart of Jesus produces the happiest fruits in those who practice it, and procures for them the most precious spiritual advantages. Let us recall to mind on this subject the words of Blessed Margaret Mary, and the promises she heard from the mouth of our divine Savior.

"Our Lord," says she, "made known to me, that in manifesting his heart to men, he opened to them all the treasures of his love, grace, mercy, sanctification, and salvation which that heart contains, so as to enrich with profusion all who would wish to pay him and procure him all the love and honor in their power."

"Why can I not relate to the whole world what I know about his amiable devotion! Jesus Christ made known to me, that he wishes through it to raise up to

himself an infinite number of faithful servants, of perfect friends, and of grateful children.

“I do not know of any exercise of devotion in the spiritual life more calculated to raise the soul in a short time to the highest sanctity, and to make it taste the true sweetness to be found in the service of God. Yes, I say it with confidence, were it known how agreeable this devotion is to Jesus Christ, there is not a Christian, however little love he may have for that amiable Savior, who would not at once practice it.

“Religious persons would derive from it so much succor that no other means would be needed to reëstablish the first fervor and most exact regularity in communities the most irregular, and to lead to the height of sanctity those that live in the most strict regularity.

“My divine Savior has given me to understand, that those employed in the salvation of souls will have the art of touching the most hardened hearts, and will labor with marvellous success if they are themselves penetrated with tender devotion to the divine Heart.

“As to secular persons, they will find by this means all the help necessary for their state, that is to say, peace in their families, solace in their labors, and the blessings of heaven on their undertakings. It is fittingly in this adorable heart that they will find a place of refuge during life, but especially at the hour of death. Oh! how sweet it is to die after having had a constant devotion to the heart of Him who is to judge us!

“Finally, it is evident that there is no one in the world who would not experience every kind of succor

from heaven if he had a perfectly grateful love for Jesus Christ, such as is that shown to him, in devotion to his Sacred Heart.

“Our Lord made me see that the names of a great number of persons are inscribed on his Sacred Heart because of the desire they have to see it loved and honored, and that for that reason they will never be effaced from it.”

But let us hear Jesus Christ speaking to that holy religious : “ My heart,” says he to her, “ is so filled with love for men, that it wishes to manifest itself for the purpose of enriching them with these precious treasures I discover to you, and which contain the sanctification calculated to draw them from the abyss of perdition.

“ Let this devotion be published every where, let it be instilled and recommended as a sure and easy means of obtaining from me true love of God, and the victory over the strongest passions, of arriving in a short time, and in a very easy way, at the sublimest perfection.”

“ I promise you that my heart will expand to pour upon those who shall honor it, the influences of its divine love. This devotion will give birth to love in the most insensible hearts, and will inflame the hearts of the least fervent.”

Ah ! who can think of these words of the divine Master without being convinced of the inappreciable advantages of devotion to the Sacred Heart ? And even if we had not such formal promises, would it not be sufficient to reflect on what it is in itself, to understand

that it must produce, as it does, the happiest fruits of salvation ?

It makes us study, and consequently admire and honor the interior dispositions of Jesus Christ ; it makes us gain a more intimate knowledge of his divine perfections, and penetrate deeper into the mysteries he has wrought, and that knowledge of which it is so precious a meaning ; far from drying up the soul, it is to it a saving stream cooling and fertilizing it.

It makes us love Jesus Christ with a love of complacency, preference, and gratitude. It thus develops the purest, noblest, and holiest sentiment that can exist in the soul.

By it we place our heart under the divine influences of the heart of that adorable Master, and from that moment it becomes inflamed with the fires of charity with which he burns, and becomes a partaker in his goodness, his sweetness, his humility, his compassion for the unfortunate, and his zeal for the glory of his heavenly Father and for the salvation of souls. Is it not a truth of experience, that we are led to imitate those that we love ? Now what can more lead us to love Jesus Christ than the worship of his infinitely adorable heart which is the seat of all virtue, the collection of all perfections ? Ah ! could we contemplate him with faith and piety without ardently desiring that ours may be like to his, and without resolving that we will do all to accomplish that end ?

Devotion to the Sacred Heart sheds a sweet perfume

over all our religious exercises, which it makes us perform with more interior spirit and more love. It is an abundant source of spiritual consolation, but consolations that are real and salutary, addressing itself to the heart and developing in us a true love of virtue.

It nourishes, purifies, vivifies piety. It destroys the obstacles to the Kingdom of God in us; it inspires us with a relish for prayer; it makes us take delight in assisting at holy Mass, in communion, and in visits to the Blessed Sacrament. It makes us think on the goodness of Jesus Christ; it frees us from every servile fear; and it fills us with the sweetest and the most perfect confidence.

It is an inexhaustible source of graces eminently calculated to make us strong against the attacks of the enemy of our salvation, courageous and persevering in the practice of our duties, fervent in our holy exercises zealous to acquire the perfection to which we ought to tend.

By the mere fact that it makes us act with more love, how greatly does it increase the merit of our actions, and the efficacy of our prayers! What blessings it draws down upon ourselves, our families, our communities, and our pupils!

The Christian who is devout to the Sacred Heart, cannot but experience the truth of these words of Jesus Christ: "If any one love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and he will come to him, and will make an abode with him."*

* St. John xiv. 23.

APPLICATION.

Let us profess the greatest esteem for this salutary devotion which is an abundant source of so many good things, and which is infinitely precious to whoever considers it with the eyes of faith.

Let us thank God our Savior for having revealed it, so as to revive, thereby, charity which alas ! has grown so cold in our souls : let us thank him with all our hearts for having given us so advantageous a means of enriching ourselves for heaven.

Let us contribute, as far as in our power, to propagate it more and more ; let us make it known, appreciated, and practiced. For that purpose let us love it ourselves, and gladly embrace its holy practices, and among others, that of performing all our actions in union with the heart of Jesus Christ, from the same motives and for the same ends as that divine Savior.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, who teachest us of what immense treasures devotion to thy divine heart is the source, grant by thy grace that our whole labor may be to study that adorable heart, to praise it, to offer it our homage of adoration and reparation, to act in all things in union with it, so that those treasures may be our inheritance, and that our soul purified here below by the flames of charity that consume it, may be admitted to contemplate it, and unite with it through eternity. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 370.)

FIFTH MEDITATION.

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART AND
DEVOTION TO THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

"Make his works known among the people."—Isa., xii. 4.

CONSIDERATION.

DEVOTION to the Sacred Heart although very distinct from devotion to the holy Eucharist, has nevertheless the closest affinity with it. It has for its object that love of Jesus Christ for men, of which the holy Eucharist is the most marvellous invention; that adorable heart which like the body of our Savior is present day and night in our tabernacles, offers itself for us, and unites with our heart when we have the happiness of communicating. It has as a general end, to acknowledge and adore the love of that Sacred Heart in all it has done for men, and particularly in the institution of the holy Eucharist; and as a special end, to repair by every means possible, the outrages of men to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

The Church makes us remark this connexion when it says, that it has authorised the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus "that under the symbol of that heart,

the faithful might celebrate with more devotion and fervor the charity of Jesus Christ. . . . instituting in memory of his death the sacrament of his body and his blood ” *

Besides, our Lord teaches this himself, by revealing his designs to Blessed Margaret Mary, particularly, when she was in the presence of the holy tabernacle, by selecting for the feast of his Sacred Heart the first day after the octave of Corpus Christi, by showing that nothing so afflicts him as the coldness, indifference, and insults of which the holy Eucharist is the object, and by prescribing holy Communion as a principal practice.

Let us hear him saying to her: “I have an ardent thirst to be honored and loved by men in the holy Sacrament, but I find scarce any one who offers to quench my thirst by making me some return. My heart can, in this mystery as on the cross, complain that it is exposed to insult and suffering; in its abandonment it seeks some consolation in thee, and other fervent souls I expect that you will repair by your homage the injuries men do to me, communicating for that end on the first Friday of every month, and moreover, every time that obedience will allow you.”

It is then evident that the more we enter the spirit and practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart, the more progress we make in devotion to the holy Eucharist, and the more zeal we have to excite it in those souls over which we can have any influence.

* Sixth lesson of Matins.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart preserves or recalls the thought of the holy Eucharist. By making us reflect on the love of Jesus Christ, it transports us in spirit to the holy Tabernacle, where that love is manifested in the most surprising manner; where its most precious pledge is given, where the King of heaven dwells a captive of love, and from which He comes forth only to lead us with the gifts of his tenderness, to bless us, or give Himself to us with his merits and graces.

It inspires us to visit him frequently, to make demands for the isolation in which the indifference of so many Christians leaves him. It teaches us to adore him, thank him, and pray to him with lively fervor, to pay him a tribute of love proceeding truly from a heart inflamed with love for him, and longing to procure him the consolations he wishes to receive from souls devoted to him.

In making us study the heart of Jesus, it makes us understand how much he desires men to partake of the banquet he has prepared for them. He shows us written on his divine heart with letters of blood, the invitation he has given us to go and receive him: "Come all to me, for everything is ready, let he who is thirsty come to me and drink; come my friends, eat my bread and drink the wine I have prepared for you."

It leads us to respond at once to his appeal, to love holy Communion with our whole souls, to make it frequently, and to prepare each time for it with the greatest possible care.

By developing in us love for Jesus Christ, and the

will to imitate his interior dispositions, it leads us to receive him often, because love tends continually to the closest, most durable, and most perfect union, and because nothing can so help to form us on the model of Jesus Christ, to unite our heart to his adorable heart, to receive its divine influences.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart revives and maintains in souls fervor and confidence, and thereby, presents two great causes to keep us away from the holy table; tepidity and servile fear.

Jesus Christ discovers his love to the love devoted to his Sacred Heart, and the favors he heaps on every one who comes to him with the requisite dispositions. At this sight it feels an irresistible attraction to frequent the holy table, and it exclaims: "God of the Eucharist, thou alone art repose, my consolation, my joy, my hope, my life: and I wish to unite myself more closely to thee here, that I may be united to thee afterwards through eternity."

It goes to him with love, that is to say, with the best of dispositions, and which united to purity of conscience, can supply all others. What profit then it desires from the heavenly Manna, and what strength, light, and joy, the visit of its beloved brings it.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart, in as far as it is a reparation of the outrages offered to Our Lord in the divine Sacrament, tends directly to revive devotion to the holy Eucharist. It proposes to console the heart of Jesus for the coldness and insults offered to his sacrament of love by men, of their keeping away from the

sacred table, and for the sacrileges that are committed. But what is more proper for this end than devout assistance at the holy sacrifice; frequent and fervent communions; visits to the Blessed Sacrament; zeal to raise up true adorers to Jesus in the holy Eucharist, and to lead to the holy table souls that appreciate the gifts he makes us of himself and his graces?

APPLICATION.

What reason we have to esteem devotion to the Sacred Heart, and to thank the divine Master for the institution of that worship of love which is of itself the source of such spiritual riches, and which is so efficacious in developing in souls, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament; let us love the adorable Emmanuel more and more, who for love of us has established his home in our sanctuaries, where he unweariedly awaits us, and where he gives himself to us with so much goodness and generosity.

Let us love, among the practices of devotion to the Sacred Heart, those above all that have reference to the adorable Eucharist. Let us, in a spirit of love and reparation, communicate on the festival of the Sacred Heart, the first Friday of every month, and whenever the Forty Hours' devotion is held.

When we can, let us visit the Blessed Sacrament and there confide to the heart of Jesus all that passes in our own: our joys and our sufferings, our hopes and fears, our projects and troubles.

Let us assist regularly, and with the greatest piety,

at the visits which are sometimes made in honor of the Sacred Heart. Let us be in the presence of Jesus, as Mary and John were at the foot of the Cross, contemplating through the wound in his side, the divine heart opened with a lance, and pouring forth upon earth, with blood and water, the treasure of graces he merited for us by his sacrifice on Calvary.

PRAYER.

Be thou blessed, O sweet Savior who invitest us with so much love, to go to thee in thy adorable Sacrament. Oh ! grant by thy grace that we may fully respond to thy designs, and show how we esteem thy favors.

Grant we beseech thee, that we may be filled with devotion to thy Sacred Heart, and consequently, to the adorable Eucharist ; that being more and more the object of thy favors, we may obtain that of being grounded firmly and persevering till death in thy holy love. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 371.)

SIXTH MEDITATION.

PREROGATIVES AND RICHES OF THE HEART
OF JESUS.

"You shall draw waters with joy out of the Savior's fountains."
—Isa., xii. 3.

CONSIDERATION.

THE heart of Jesus is the masterpiece of the omnipotence and infinite goodness of God, being alone worthy of arresting the eyes of his love, and being the object of his predilection, and is alone capable of itself of paying him all the homage due to him.

The heart of Jesus is the temple in whch the most Holy Trinity finds its sovereign delight ; it is the altar whereon the Victim of our reconciliation is unceasingly offered, where the divine incense is consumed, whose smoke rises to the highest port of heaven ; it is the propitiatory whence our supplications reach surely to the Father to disarm his justice, and obtain for us that we experience only the effects of his mercy and generosity.

The heart of Jesus is the source of the life of the Man-God, the centre of all his affections, the organ of all his sentiments. United hypostatically to the person of

the Word from which it cannot be separated, it is truly the heart of God, holy with the very holiness of God, possessing all the riches of nature, grace, and heaven, and worthy of the adorations of men and angels.

Jesus himself said of his heart to Blessed Margaret Mary that "It is the book of life in which is contained the science of love": it is the assemblage of all perfections, the seat of all virtues; an infinite abyss of charity, goodness, love, compassion, generosity, sweetness, humility, and patience. It is the most loving, the purest, the noblest, the greatest, the most magnanimous heart that has ever been, or ever will be. The more the soul studies it, the more moral beauties it discovers there, which fill it with admiration, which lead it to praise, bless, and extol it as far as possible, and to burn with the desire of beholding it in all its divine splendor in heaven.

The Blessed Margaret Mary saw the heart of Jesus, one day, more brilliant than the sun, and of an almost infinite greatness; and at the same time she saw herself like a black and shapeless atom, making a thousand useless efforts to approach that light, until Jesus Christ drawing her to him, said to her: "Bury thyself in my greatness, and take care never to depart from it."

Enlightened by the principles of faith, let us also see the heart of Jesus in its beauty and greatness, and let us make our abode in it forever.

"The Jews," says Abbé Diderot, "had the sacred fire, but which was quenched before the coming of Jesus Christ; in exchange for that, the divine Savior has brought upon earth the fire of his love, of which his ador-

able heart is an immense furnace, capable of setting the world on fire."

Let us hear our adorable Master reveal this himself, when he says to Blessed Margaret Mary : " My divine heart is so filled with love for men and for you in particular, that not being able to contain any longer the flames of its ardent charity, it must spread them by your means, and manifest itself to them, to enrich them with the treasures it contains."

It is by that love with which that heart burns, that the designs of our redemption and salvation were conceived and accomplished. It is in this heart, was cemented the alliance of God with men, and where mercy and truth, justice and peace are met. It is in this heart, that the most faithful servants of Jesus Christ have made their abode, and tasted the sweetest consolations. Oh ! how many of them could say in the language of St. Bernard : " I have found the heart of my King, my brother, my sweetest friend Jesus : what can I desire in heaven, or seek upon earth?"

That heart makes the strength and joy of the Christian. It is the sun which enlightens, warms, vivifies, souls. What a sweet and salutary influence it exercises over them ! What sublime ardors it communicates to them ! What fruits of sanctity it makes them produce !

It is from it that emanate, as from their source all the graces of expiation, reconciliation, and sanctification, given to men. Therefore the Church calls it: " The inexhaustible source of goodness, the mysterious stream where we can wash our robe of innocence in the blood

of the Lamb, the holy work which contains the tables, not of the law of fear, but of the law of grace, pardon, and mercy."

It is an asylum against the scourges of divine justice, and our defence against the enemies of our salvation. It intercedes for us with the Father, succors us in our dangers, takes from our heart the attraction to the world, and love for creatures ; suggests to us holy desires, and makes us surmount the difficulties that are in the way to our advancement in perfection.

The heart of Jesus is the source of true joy ; it is, according to the Blessed Margaret Mary, "a delicious garden where the weary soul refreshes itself."

What can we desire that it does not contain, and is not willing to grant us ? Is there not in it an infinite, spiritual treasure, always open, the access to which is perfectly free, and where every thing presses us to go, and draw with full hands the graces necessary to avoid sin, to live in pure love, and thus to merit to go, and contemplate and praise him with the angels and saints in the New Jerusalem ?

APPLICATION.

Let us adore, thank, and praise, the heart of Jesus, let us proclaim his greatness, his prerogatives, his virtues, and his mercies, in union with the most holy Virgin, and the angels and saints, who pay him in heaven the homage of adoration, love, and gratitude.

Let us be zealous to make him known, loved, and adored ; to raise up souls devoted to his worship, who

will gladly embrace the salutary practices of this devotion, and in their turn contribute to propagate it in the Church.

Let us rejoice in the gift which Jesus Christ has made to us of his heart, in which are all the riches of heaven: let us testify on every occasion that we are truly grateful for that signal favor, and let us not cease to thank him for his infinite goodness.

Let us know how to profit by the advantage offered to us. Let us have recourse with confidence to that divine heart which has all power with his heavenly Father, and which wishes our sanctification more than we can wish it ourselves.

“Let us make it the depository of all we do, offering to it our actions, so that he may dispose of them to his pleasure, uniting ourselves always with his holy intentions. Let us make our abode in it as in a strong castle, above all when we are assaulted by temptations or adversity, for then we shall find all we need, so that we may not be cast down or troubled about anything.”*

Yes, let us go to the heart of Jesus in our joy and our troubles. Poor in supernatural goods, let us go to enrich ourselves from the treasure of all graces; tepid in the service of God, let us go to inflame our hearts with the sacred fire of that burning furnace; weak and languishing let us go to revive our strength at the source of true life. Let us enter into that asylum by purity of conscience, detachment from creatures

* Blessed Margaret Mary.

and humility; let us establish ourselves there by obedience and generosity, and let us remain there forever.

PRAAYER.

I adore thee, O heart of Jesus, and I acknowledge and proclaim, with the most lively joy, thy infinite greatness. I would wish to pay thee a homage worthy of thyself, but knowing that I cannot, I offer thee, to supply my poverty, all the honors, all the praises that the saints and blessed spirits pay thee, and will forever pay thee, all the homage that the immaculate heart of Mary offers up to thee. United to that divine Mother, I offer myself wholly to thee, and I consecrate to thy glory, all I have and all I am, from this moment, and forever.

O adorable heart, living source of grace, treasury of all the riches of God, fountain of sweetness, ocean of love, abyss of mercy, be forever blessed and praised in heaven and earth. To thee be glory, honor, and thanksgiving, on the part of all creatures till the end of time, and throughout eternity. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 371.)

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

LOVE OF THE HEART OF JESUS FOR GOD
THE FATHER.

"I love the Father."—St. John xiv. 31.

CONSIDERATION.

GOD infinitely good ought to be loved with an infinite love. But who will love with such a love ? Not men who are dust of the earth and whose heart is alas ! so contracted, so narrow, so imperfect ; not the saints nor angels, nor even the glorious Virgin Mary, for however sublime and admirable are the flames of their charity, they are limited and consequently inferior to what his loving perfections, who is the Sovereign Good, deserve.

That homage of infinite love, can be rendered to God only by the heart of his Son, who renders it, in fact, in the most perfect manner.

Oh ! who can imagine with what ardor that Heart burns for the Being who possesses all goodness, all wisdom, all beauty, and who is mercy, truth, order, and holiness itself !

Jesus Christ has a perfect knowledge of his Heavenly

Father, which necessarily supposes perfect love : he sees him face to face, and therefore, his adorable heart burns with the fires of an infinite charity.

Yes, O divine Savior, you love your Father, as he loves you ; you love him with that eternal love from which proceeds the third person of the adorable Trinity, and the contemplation of which makes the supreme happiness of the angels and saints : you love him with the love which he has for himself.

He had said to us by his prophet: “I will give you a new heart.”* That heart is yours, which has in fact been given to us in your adorable Sacrament, and which gives us the means of fulfilling the great commandment of the law : “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.”†

The love of the heart of Jesus for his heavenly Father is a constant, unchangeable love : the first act of the Son of God upon earth, was an act of love which has never been interrupted ; from the moment of his Incarnation till that of his death he has not ceased to say by his dispositions and works: “I love the Father,” and those words he repeats from our tabernacles and on our altars, as he repeats them in heaven.

What a fire of the purest and brightest flame is in his divine heart ! with what transcendent splendor it burns !

Ah, why can we not contemplate it, as so many pious souls to whom that favor was granted, have contem-

* Ezechiel, xxxvi, 26.

† St. Luke, x. 27.

plated it ! Above all why do we not share in its love as they shared in it, so that we might say with truth : " Your love, O Jesus, is my love ; my heart makes but one with your heart, and is consumed by the same flames, desiring, wishing, seeking, only to possess the Father who is in heaven, and in whom alone can be happiness and peace."

The heart of Jesus has loved his heavenly Father with a courageous, pure, disinterested love, it loved him equally on Gethsemane and Calvary, as on Mount Thabor ; it loved him not for itself nor for any motive of personal interest, but for him and because of him : it loved him because he is God.

This love of the heart of Jesus for the Father was a love of submission, obedience, zeal, and devotedness, as is shown by these words of our divine Redeemer : " I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do." *

Yes, it was in virtue of that love, that the Word of God became flesh, that he humbled himself so as to take our nature ; that he prayed, labored, taught ; that he wrought all the miracles of his life, endured numberless privations, suffered during his passion every kind of suffering and opprobrium, wished to become a bloody victim on the cross, and to continue his sacrifice in an unbloody manner on our altars.

It was in virtue of that love, that he faithfully fulfilled all the designs of his Father, so that he could say : " My food is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work " † and in another place : " I have finished

* St. John, xiv. 31.

† *Ibid.*, iv. 34.

the work which thou gavest me to do,"* and finally on the cross : "It is consummated.†"

It was in virtue of that love that he was consumed with zeal for the house of God, and that he sacrificed himself to raise up adorers to the Father in spirit and truth.

It was in virtue of that love, that he came to cast into chains the angels who rebelled against their Creator, to destroy their empire, to give men the means of escaping from their cruel and odious tyranny.

It is in virtue of that love that he loves men, in whom he recognises the creatures, the children, the likenesses of his Father, and who are the objects of so great love on the part of that sovereign goodness.

It is in virtue of that love that he is present on our altars under the consecrated species, where in his own name and in that of all men, he offers himself as a victim of holocaust, thanksgiving, expiation, and supplication, where he receives all our homage of adoration, gratitude, reparation, and petition, to make them pass through his heart and afterwards to offer them to his Father.

It is in virtue of that love that he communicates himself to us with so much profusion, and that by his grace he does not cease to allow our hearts to direct all their affections to God alone. In how many ways he speaks to us of his Father, and says to us : "Love him with your whole heart for, that, with the love of your neighbor, is the true fulfilment of the law."

O adorable heart, O perfect model of charity ! O King of hearts ! why have we not your sentiments !

* St. John, xvii. 4.

† *Ibid.*, xix. 30.

why do we not burn with your love! . . . But who can procure us that signal favor but thou alone who art the very furnace of holy love?

APPLICATION.

Let us rejoice at the thought of the homage of infinite love which the heart of Jesus pays to his heavenly Father in the name of creatures, and through which he supplies for the coldness and indifference of our hearts.

Let us strive to imitate the charity of Jesus Christ our Master and our Model. In union of heart with him, let us love God with all the powers of our soul, let us love him as he wishes to be loved by us, and as he leads us to love him by his grace.

Let our love for him be true, founded on the knowledge of his perfections, proceeding from faith in his amiableness, his goodness, his love, and his providence.

Let that love be, as much as possible, disinterested; let us not be of the number of those mercenary souls, who have nothing in view but their own interests. Let us give our heart to God, for God, with a view to himself, because he is the sovereign goodness and infinitely amiable, and has enriched us with his favors.

Let us give him our whole heart: let us not suffer any affection within us that does not proceed from divine love, that we may be able to say to him, in all truth, with the seraphic Francis of Assisium: "My God, and my all!"

Let us love him with a firm, courageous, constant, unalterable love, whatever be our temptations, our tribula-

tions, our spiritual dryness ; let us love him with a love which far from being weakened may be strengthened in trials.

Let us love him with an affective love showing itself by the faithful fulfilment of the divine will and an entire devotedness to the work of salvation confided to us.

Let us have recourse for that end to the heart of Jesus, which not only gives us all the lessons of perfect charity, but is our true means of putting them in practice.

PRAYER.

O heart of Jesus who teaches us how to love our Father who is in heaven, grant by the grace of which thou art the inexhaustible source, that our heart may understand thy example and imitate it ; that it may be truly animated by divine charity ; that it may love the sovereign good in union with and through thee : that it may love him more and more until that love receives its consummation in our heavenly country. Amen.

(See Résumés, page 372.)

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

THE HEART OF JESUS IN ITS SENTIMENTS
AS VICTIM.

"I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify thy name for ever."—Ps., lxxxv. 12.

CONSIDERATION.

The sacrifice which God accepts, is the sacrifice of the heart ; and it is on that account that the heart of Jesus has wished to offer itself as a victim, and to render to the Father all the homage of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and prayer, due to him on the part of creatures.

The heart of Jesus has become a victim of holocaust. Understanding the infinite greatness of God, it honors him infinitely ; by its humility, its obedience, its respect, its admiration, offers him a perpetual and worthy homage of praise. It glorifies his providence whose care extends even to the smallest of birds,* his goodness which makes his sun rise upon the good and the bad,† his mercy by which he pardons those who repent, his justice whose

* St. Matt., vi. 26.

† St. Matt., v. 45.

hour comes at last, whose chastisements are so terrible, his knowledge, his love. . . . in a word he glorifies all his perfections saying by his very dispositions : “I honor my Father:”* “Father, I give thee thanks:”† “All mine are thine, and thine are mine:”‡ “Just Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee.”§

Thus this divine heart is a perfect model of that life of adoration and praise which ought to be the life of our hearts, particularly of us who are religious, who are consecrated to give glory to God, “as far as in our power and he might require of us.”

The heart of Jesus has made itself the victim of thanksgiving, thanking the Father worthily for all his favors towards creatures. Do we not see in the gospel that before working the miracle of the multiplication of loaves, or the raising of Lazarus, or before instituting the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus Christ raises his eyes to heaven and gives thanks to his Father? Does he not thank him, thank in the same way in a number of other circumstances? The hymn of gratitude always rises from his heart towards that sovereign goodness, to tell him how he appreciates his favors, and to trace these back to their source by proclaiming their author.

But as if that was not enough, he has wished that this gratitude should be perpetual and universal, and he has instituted for that end the sacrament whose name signifies “Thanksgiving,” and in which this divine heart

* St. John, viii. 49.

† *Ibid.*, xi. 41.

‡ *Ibid.*, xvii. 10.

§ *Ibid.*, 25.

glorifies, extols, and thanks, everywhere in the Church the goodness, the liberality, and the munificence of God.

The heart of Jesus has made itself a victim of expiation, begging the Father to show us mercy, offering himself to fully satisfy his justice, substituting himself for us to undergo the punishments due to our sins, and to fulfill these words of Isaias : “ He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins . . . and by his bruises we are healed.”*

David, in sentiments of true sorrow, exclaimed : “ A contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise ”† but where is the heart God cannot reject, excepting that of Jesus, which was grieved, broken, crushed for our sins, and through which we have been reconciled with heaven ?

With what generosity he accepts, from the hands of his Father, the bitter chalice which we should have drank, and which he drank to the dregs ! In the womb of the most holy Virgin, at the crib, in Egypt, in Nazareth, every where that divine heart ceases not to pray for sinners, and to offer for them his merits, his blood, and his life, saying : “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”‡ He does this especially in the garden of Olives, during the course of his passion, and on the cross where, by the shedding of his precious blood, he turns aside the anger of his Father, and obtains for us, on condition of our being united with him, and

* Isa., liii. 5.

† Ps., l. 19.

‡ St. Luke, xxiii. 34.

being disposed to profit by his sacrifice, that we shall experience only the effect of his clemency.

The heart of Jesus has made itself the victim of supplication or prayer, praying for us to his heavenly Father with whom he is our Mediator, asking him to enrich us with his graces, to make us experience the effects of his generosity, goodness, and munificence; to guide us, sustain us, strengthen us, and defend us, in all times of trial, until we come to the abode of happiness he has prepared for us, and that he may be heard offering up his sentiments of adoration, his sorrows and trials, all his acts, every one of which has an infinite merit.

What has he done but pray continually for men, but intercede for us with Him who can refuse him nothing? Therefore Our divine Lord appearing one day to St. Gertrude said to her: "My heart has two beats: by the first I appease God my Father, and incline him to mercy towards sinners; by the second, I pray to him for the just, offering him the merits of my blood."

The heart of Jesus continues to be a victim on our altars, where, with the same merit as on Calvary, he renews in an unbloody manner the oblation by which alone the Father is worthily honored, and which, fully satisfying his justice for our offences, reconciles us with him, and makes us the objects of his liberality.

Yes, under the sacramental species, the divine Savior is in the same dispositions as on the cross, offering himself as a victim to adore God his Father, to thank him, to beg of him, along with our pardon, all the graces we

stand in need of; and this is what he will continue to do, until the day when, the number of the elect being completed, all who shall have truly wished to apply to themselves the fruits of his sacrifice, will thank through eternity the divine heart by which they have gained their last end.

APPLICATION.

Let us adore Jesus Christ in his sentiments of victim, and strive to reproduce them in our soul, so that we may, by his grace, be truly a holy victim, living and agreeable to God. Let us adore through his divine heart our Father in heaven, celebrating his greatness, his sovereignty, his omnipotence . . . and offering him, to supply for the insufficiency of our homage, the infinite honor paid him by that Sacred Heart to which ours is united. Let us have the same thoughts as St. Bernard who exclaimed, "Oh! how good, how pleasant it is to dwell in the heart of Jesus! I will adore, I will praise the name of the Lord in that holy temple. I have found a heart to pray to my God, and that is the heart of my King, my brother, my most sweet friend Jesus."

Let us ask, through the divine heart, the pardon of our sins. Let us offer up this prayer with fervor and confidence: "As the heart of Jesus has bewailed my offences, I bewail them, O Eternal Father, and I offer you his sorrow to supply mine. O Almighty God, cast your eyes on the heart of your most dear Son, see the homage and satisfaction he offers to you for all sinners, and for his sake grant us mercy." *

* Blessed Margaret Mary.

Let us make the supplications we offer up to God pass through the heart of Jesus, and we may be sure of being heard. Let us ask, through the merits of that adorable heart, all we stand in need of in the order of nature, and still more in the order of grace: let us pray through him for all the wants of the Church, our Institute, and our families.

Let us beg through his mediation the conversion of sinners, especially of those who are at the point of death, the perseverance of the just, and the deliverance of the souls in purgatory.

Let us put ourselves in these dispositions especially when we assist at the holy sacrifice. Oh then, let us make truly but one in heart with the adorable Victim, who, on our altars offers to the eternal Father the homage due to him.

PRAYER.

We beseech thee, O God full of mercy, cast thy eyes on the heart of thy beloved Son, and in consideration of the sufferings he rendered, and the worthy satisfaction he offers thee, grant to our prayers and repentance, the pardon of our sins.

Deign to enkindle in our hearts that love, with which he was consumed for Thee in the days of his mortal life, and by which we shall merit to go and praise Thee with him in heaven. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 372.)

NINTH MEDITATION.

MARY AND THE HEART OF JESUS.

"I am the mother of fair love."—Eccles., xxiv. 24.

CONSIDERATION.

THE most holy Virgin is our most admirable, most perfect model as to our duties in reference to the Sacred Heart, and she is the most direct, the most infallible means by which we can go to that throne of grace, to establish our abode there, and enrich ourselves with the treasures it contains.

Enlightened more than all other creatures as to the designs of God, Mary, even before the mystery of the Incarnation, and by the light of prophecies, studied, knew, and admired the sentiments of Him who was to be her son, and measured, if we may say so, the length, the breath, the height and the depth, of the infinite charity with which he was going to take our nature upon him, and to save us by his labors, his sufferings, and his death.

Who can doubt that, filled with the Holy Ghost even from her Immaculate Conception, she knew what has been revealed of the goodness, the sweetness, the hu-

mility, the charity, and the generosity, of the divine Messiah, of whom it was written : "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. . . . he hath sent me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up."* "Behold my servant. . . . the bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench"†

But how much more did she advance in that knowledge after the Incarnation, and during the life of our Savior ! Who can tell what horizons met her gaze when bearing in her womb the Son of God made man, she felt, if we may so express it, the first throbings of that adorable heart, with which her own beat in unison, having the same love and the same life !

What knowledge did she not acquire of his virtues, his amiableness, and his perfections, when she contemplated the God-Man in the different circumstances of his life : when, at Bethlehem, she pressed the divine infant to her motherly heart, and covered him with kisses ; when, at Nazareth, she saw the adorable youth laboring with her and her holy spouse, and concealing his divine greatness under the exterior of a poor artisan ; when she accompanied the Emmanuel teaching his law of love, and working his numberless miracles of charity ; when she received him under the veils of his sacrament of love ; when she ascended to Mount Calvary with him to associate herself in his sacrifice, and when she saw his divine heart piercéd by a lance,

* Isa., lxi. 1.

† Isa., lxii. 1, 3.

shed the last drop of redeeming blood and holy water, which purified the world !

What homage, then, of adoration and thanksgiving did she offer to that heart, worthy of all glory and all praise ! With what transports did she celebrate its perfections ! How did she extol it, on the day, when, in the enthusiasm of her gratitude, she exclaimed : " My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior for he that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name, and his mercy is from generation to generation to them that fear him ! " *

Mary loved the heart of Jesus with an inexpressible love. Her heart had no tendency, no movement, but towards his heart, with which it was so closely united that nothing in nature can give us a just idea of it. Ah ! if the Scripture tells us that the heart of Jonathan was, as it were, one with that of David, by what expression could we describe the union of the heart of Mary with that of her divine son ?

What communications passed between them ! What fires of love went and returned from the one to the other ! With what perfection was the Mother of fair love enamoured of love ! The Seraphim are ardent flames before the throne of God ; what then was the heart of the Queen of the Seraphim in presence of the divine heart, which is the throne of infinite love ?

O Immaculate heart of Mary, you love the Sacred Heart of my Jesus with a love that exhausts the

* St. Luke, 1. 46-50.

admiration of heaven and earth, and which the angelic choirs shall celebrate through all eternity! Why do we not participate in your love! Why do we not love as you do! Obtain for us that grace, O Mary; for thou hast all power with God!

Mary, knowing and loving the heart of Jesus, imitated, in the most perfect manner, its charity, sweetness, humility, goodness, love, generosity, in a word, all its virtues. She shared in all his sentiments: with him she rejoiced over the downfall of satan, and the propagation of the Gospel; and she wept over the blindness and misfortune of the souls which, like guilty Jerusalem, did not know the day of the visitation; with him she desired, with a most vehement desire, that the kingdom of the Father should be established everywhere upon earth. She had the same joys, the same sorrows, the same objects, as that adorable heart, so that her Immaculate heart is the most perfect image of his.

She has by her intercession all power over him, and is to us the surest means of making our prayers reach to him, and receiving afterwards the graces with which he is pleased to enrich us.

Oh! how sweet and consoling it is to Christians to represent to themselves, between them and the heart of Jesus, the heart of Mary soliciting for them the goodness and clemency of God the Savior, and communicating to them the heavenly favors she has obtained for them! What a motive for joy and confidence! If sometimes our soul is seized with fear at the thought that Jesus Christ is the Supreme Judge, who will scrutinise all our

works, is it not a subject of confidence, to think that it has near him as Mediator the heart of Mary, his most holy Mother, who is also our Mother, and to whom he can refuse nothing?

Yes, every thing gives us to understand that happy are the servants of Mary: they cannot but be the objects of the liberality of the heart of Jesus.

APPLICATION.

Let us not separate, in our devotion, the heart of Mary from the heart of Jesus; let us, by our meditations on her heart, render to his the homage of adoration, thanksgiving, love, and supplication.

In union will Mary, let us study the heart of Jesus; let us strive to sound the abyss of the love and mercy of the Son of God become our brother, our friend, our companion, our victim, our guide, and our food.

Let us gladly devote ourselves to making that adorable heart known and glorified, to making it reign over all hearts: let us be, as far as we can in our state the apostles of the devotion of which it is the object; for it is by that chiefly we shall secure the all-powerful protection of the holy heart of Mary.

Let us love the heart of Jesus, but with an effective love, that will make us its faithful imitators. Following the example of the most holy Virgin, let us have the same desires as it, the same affections, the same end, remembering that it is the essence of Christian and religious perfection.

Let us, like Mary, take the greatest share in the suffer-

ings of the heart of Jesus, let us lament that his love for men is so little known, that his benefits are paid alas! with so much ingratitude, that his passion is continued by the offences offered to him in his sacrament. . . . Let us offer him, in compensation with the homage of our piety, the love, respect, and gratitude, always felt for him by the heart of Mary, who alone has been more pleasing to him than all the saints and angels together.

PRAYER.

O God full of mercy, who, for the salvation of sinners, hast placed in the pure and immaculate heart of the glorious Virgin Mary, sentiments of goodness and pity towards us, conformable to those of the adorable heart of thy Son, grant, by the intercession of that holy Mother of divine love, and by the merits of her most sweet and most amiable heart, that we may be found conformable to the heart of Jesus, and worthy to be allowed to possess that sovereign good through a happy eternity.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 373.)

TENTH MEDITATION.

THE CHURCH AND THE HEART OF JESUS.

"I sleep, and my heart watcheth."—Cant., v. 2.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us transport ourselves to the important time when the sacrifice of our reconciliation was accomplished, let us contemplate the new Adam on the Cross, where, reposing in the arms of death, he fulfilled what the mysterious sleep of the first man in the earthly paradise had prefigured, when she was created who was to be called the "Mother of the living." Let us see a soldier advance towards the crucified God, and strike him on the side with his lance which penetrated even to his heart: let us consider the blood and water which issuing from that wound, flow down upon the earth. Let us with the doctors of the Church, look on that blood and that water as forming the life of the Church, as being the source of that astonishing and fruitful vitality which nothing can weaken, which becomes more powerful even by the obstacles opposed to it, and which has produced, and still produces through

the whole world the most admirable fruits of sanctification and salvation.

Yes, it is from the heart of Jesus proceeds the Church the spouse of the new Adam, the Mother of all those who live by grace. It is also by that heart that she exists, for its wound being always open, it continues to shed, with the water which purifies souls, the blood which feeds, strengthens, ennobles, and makes them in some sense divine.

It is the ever-active recipient of that sacred fire which is the essence of the supernatural life. It was by it the first Christians were so united, that it could be said of them, that they had but one heart and one soul ; living in their hearts it consumed with its divine fire every tie of self love or ill-regulated affection, and filled them with sentiments of charity, goodness, sweetness, humility, and compassion.

What it did in them it continues, uniting all the hearts of the children of the Church, and communicating to them the love of virtue, and the courage to practise it. To it must be attributed the zeal of the apostles, the heroism of the martyrs, the constancy of the confessors, the purity of the virgins, and all the self-sacrifices, produced in so many forms, in the Christian world.

That divine heart is the secure asylum, unpregnable refuge of the Church which trusts to it to be secure from all that disquiets or troubles it. Therefore, St. Thomas of Villanova, after having cited this passage of the royal prophet : “The sparrow hath found herself

a house, and the turtle a nest for herself where she may lay her young ones," develops it in these words: "As the Son of God fixed his abode in the bosom of his Father, the Church has fixed her abode in the bosom of her beloved; she enters there by the opening of his sacred side, she there hides her children sheltered from storms, and sleeps in peace. That heart, a sacred altar, is the inviolable retreat, where the turtle may lay her young ones in safety, until the day when unfolding their wings, they will clothe with immortality their now corruptible bodies."

The Church has not ceased to adore, thank, love, and extol, the divine heart. She did so on Calvary, by the ministry of the most holy Virgin, St. John, Mary Magdalene and the other holy persons who saw it pierced by a spear, and pouring forth the last drops of the blood of expiation.

She did so by the saints of all ages who, kissing on the crucifix the wound of the side, adored the divine heart which the spear had opened to them, and whence issued the most precious graces. She has done so by her ministers who have always exhorted the faithful to return Jesus love for love, and to repair, as far as might depend on them, the offences he received from men, above all the outrages offered to him in his sacrament of love. Thus, as regards what is its spirit, devotion to the Sacred Heart has always been enjoined recommended, and encouraged, by that tender Mother so attentive to the wants of our souls.

However, the day came when it pleased the divine

Master to reveal his heart to us in a special manner, by the ministry of the Blessed Margaret Mary. Then, the Church, always inspired by Him, who is wisdom itself, examined, discussed, weighed, and appreciated, everything, and affirmed that the worship of the Sacred Heart is just and holy; she established the feast in reference to it and ordained that it should be celebrated through the whole Catholic world; she has stated in her liturgy the characters of that worship, she has opened to those who practice it, the treasures of her indulgences; she has raised to her altars the holy nun to whom it had been revealed, and whose life was consecrated to its establishment and propagation.

She exposes in most of her churches the image of that divine heart: in how many does he not show himself to us as he appeared to the Blessed Margaret Mary, with its wound still bleeding, with the thorns that surround and pierce it, with the cross that surrounds it, with the flames of which it is the centre and which it casts forth in every sense!

The Church, which in our days especially, thus honors the heart of Jesus, and causes it to be honored, invokes it in an especial manner for the present necessities of the times, persuaded, according to the words of Pope Pius IX, that society has no hope but in that adorable heart, and that is it that will cure all our evils.

But let us hear this holy Pontiff speak to us of devotion to the Sacred Heart, in the decree of the beatification of the glorious Margaret Mary.

“Jesus Christ,” says he, “the author and completer of

our faith, who, moved by an excessive charity, after having taken upon him the weakness of our mortal nature, offered himself to God on the altar of the cross as an unblemished Victim, to deliver us from the frightful slavery of sin, has had no more ardent desire than to excite, in every way, in the souls of men, the flames with which his heart was consumed, so that we see him give the promise of it to his disciples by these words: "I am come to bring fire upon the earth, and what do I desire but that it be enkindled."

Now, to kindle still more that fire of charity, he has wished that the veneration and worship of his Sacred Heart should be established and propagated in the Church. And who then, had he a heart of iron, would not feel himself urged to give love for love to that heart full of sweetness, which was pierced by the spear, so as to offer the soul a shelter and refuge, where it might be protected and in safety from the assaults and snares of the enemy?

Who could not feel excited to render the most willing homage to that Sacred Heart, whose wound poured forth blood and water, the sources of our life and our salvation?

APPLICATION.

Let us enter into the intentions of the Church, and embrace with pleasure the spirit and practice of the worship of love she proposes to the piety of her children.

Let us adore, with the most profound respect, the

divine heart of Jesus. Let us thank him for all the favors with which he has enriched our holy Mother the Church, for all those with which he has favored us, and for all those which our Institute, our families, and our pupils etc, owe to him.

Let us beseech him, to continue his assistances to us, to be always our refuge, our asylum, our ark of safety. Let us pray to him for all the wants of the Church, beseeching him to strengthen its life more and more, to keep all its members in the union of the same faith, to animate them with true piety, and to inflame all hearts with the fire of his love.

Let us be the Church's auxiliaries in propagating devotion to the Sacred Heart. Let us esteem it as our immense good, worthy of all our ambition, to make our pupils and Brothers know, adore, and thank, that adorable heart, whose divine love enlightens, elevates, and ennobles, souls, and detaches them from creatures, to unite them to God.

Let us then take refuge in that asylum, which is always open to us. Let us seek there only for safety, strength, consolation, repose, and joy.

Let us praise him during the whole of our life in union with the Church on earth, so as to be made worthy to praise him, after death, with the Church in heaven.

PRAYER.

O heart of Jesus, who art the life and consolation of the Church, give ear, we beseech thee, to the prayers

she offers to thee in her pressing necessities. Cause the evils that afflict her to cease ; bring back to her the children that have strayed from her fold ; beat back the waves of heresy and error that alas ! sweep over so many countries she had conquered ; unite all her children as you united the first faithful, and reign alone over their hearts.

Through you, O source of all good may she continue her mission of salvation, and may she make souls truly worthy of the recompense you reserve for those who love you with a true love.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 373.)

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

THE SAINTS AND THE HEART OF JESUS.

"That you may be able to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and height and depth, of the charity of Christ."—Eph., iii. 18, 19.

CONSIDERATION.

THE saints by the help of grace with which they co-operated so faithfully, have studied, meditated on, admired, and praised, the mysteries of the heart of Jesus, and have striven to return that adorable heart love for love, to form their own on the model of it, to become more and more closely united to it, and to ask its assistance in all their necessities, spiritual and temporal.

Was it not thus that, in the most excellent way, next to the Blessed Virgin, our glorious patron, St. Joseph, acted, he who for thirty years could contemplate unveiled, the mysteries of the divine heart? Did not St. Peter act so in a sublime degree when he said to Jesus: "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;" and St. John when, at the last supper, he reposed on the breast of his adorable Master; and St. Magdalen when she

found forgiveness through her love, or when she stood on Calvary, with the Mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple, through the last agony of her crucified Savior?

But has it not been so with a multitude of souls so justly styled seraphic, to whom our Lord manifested his heart and revealed the secrets of his love for men?

Let us recall to mind some of the expressions, and judge whether they have known, adored, and thanked, the love of our divine Redeemer.

“I have found, O most sweet Jesus,” cries out St. Bernard, “your heart which is also mine Receive, O my God, my prayers in that sanctuary of propitiation, in that ark of the covenant, in that temple of the divinity O Jesus, infinitely more amiable than all the loveliness of earth, purify me from every sin so that I may be able to approach you, and be permitted to dwell in your heart all the days of my life.”

“O my Lord,” says St. Gertrude, “I find in your heart such an abundance of good things that there is nothing left for me to desire or seek elsewhere. Outside of that amiable heart, I can find no rest. . . . O heart overflowing with sweetness! O heart boiling with love! O heart that distildest sweetness! O heart of my beloved, sink and absorb my poor heart in you! . . . Hail! adorable heart, living and life giving fountain of eternal life, infinite treasury of the divinity, glowing furnace of divine love, who art my shelter and my place of repose!”

St. Peter Damian calls the heart of Jesus an inexhaustible mine of the most precious gifts; St. Bonaventure, the gate of heaven; St. Thomas of Villanova, the asylum where the Church places her children in safety; the Blessed Margaret Mary, an ocean of love, an abyss of mercy, strength, power, and gratitude.

St. Peter Damian says of it: "It is in this adorable heart we find arms to defend ourselves, powerful help against temptations, remedies for our wounds, the sweetest consolations in our sufferings, the purest delights that man can taste in this valley of tears."

St. Francis of Sales thus expresses himself: "O Sacred Heart of Jesus! O source of infinite charity! who can sufficiently praise you? who can return you love for love?"

Such, also, was the language of St. Francis of Assisium, St. Theresa, St. Francis Xavier, St. Mechtilde. St. Liguori, that chosen soul, so enlightened with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, thus give expression to his feelings: "O heart of Jesus, heart open to be the refuge of my soul, deign to receive it. O heart inflamed with love, inflame also my heart. O make this prodigy visible to men, that a heart so ungrateful as mine may become one of those most on fire with your love. How I wish, O my Savior, that men knew the tenderness of your love for them! They would all live henceforth only to honor, praise, and love you!"

The saints have endeavored to return the divine heart love for love, saying with St. Bernard: "Who

would not, as a just return, love that heart that has so loved us ?" and adding with St. Theresa : "That there are souls that serve you better than I do, O Lord Jesus, I do not dispute ; but that any love you more, or desire your glory more ardently than I, that I should not suffer !"

How many have been martyrs of love for Jesus, as was St. Aloysisus Gonzaga, of whom St. Magdalen of Pazzi said, on seeing him in heaven : "Oh ! how Aloysisus loved !" How many have there been, who like St. Francis of Assisium, St. Theresa, and St. Gertrude bore on their hearts the wounds of the love of the heart of Jesus !

The Saints placed themselves and remained in the closest union with the heart of Jesus, where their souls abode and found repose. "If you wish to find me," wrote St. Elzear to St. Delphina, "seek me in the heart of Jesus : it is there I dwell." "O how good it is," exclaimed St. Bernard, "how pleasant it is to dwell in that heart ! Draw me wholly into that asylun, O my God, so that I may be able to remain there all the days of my life."

"How amiable is the heart of Jesus," exclaimed St. Francis of Sales ; "let us remain in that sacred habitation. O most sweet Jesus, draw me always still farther into your heart, so that I may be absorbed by your love, plunged and burned in its sweetness."

The saints have studied the heart of Jesus, and have endeavored to have the same feelings and desires as it. They have seen, in that perfect model of all virtues,

zeal for the glory of our heavenly Father, charity, sweetness, humility, love of sufferings, &c; and they have endeavored to reproduce them. Like it, they have experienced a thirst for souls, they have sacrificed themselves for them, they have professed the most complete detachment from created good things, to love only the cross which opens heaven to us.

They needed a strength, a courage truly superhuman; but they drew these from the divine heart itself, from which they asked the grace of forming themselves on the same pattern. They had recourse to it in all their wants, saying with St. Bonaventure: "I will speak to the heart of Jesus, and shall obtain from it every thing I want." In fact, they have obtained from it the most precious favors, and could repeat those words of St. Mechtilde: "I should make a large book, were I to write down all the graces I have received from the most amiable heart of Jesus."

APPLICATION.

Let us rejoice that there are souls so devoted, so united to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Let us feel a holy envy towards those who appear to have loved most; and let us ask, through their mediation, the grace of walking in their footsteps.

Children of the saints, let us be their imitators; let us study the heart of Jesus, let us enter, as far as possible, into the mysteries of his love for us; let us praise him by our homage of adoration and thanksgiving, and by our zeal in raising up for him true adorers.

Let us love him solely and for ever; and in proof of that love, let us meditate on the sentiments of his heart, and strive to reproduce them in our own. Let us confidently ask this grace of him as well as all other graces we stand in need of, remembering that he is goodness itself, and that he makes it his happiness to hear our prayers.

Let us consecrate ourselves entirely to him as did St. Francis of Sales: "My Jesus has given himself wholly to me" said he, "I give myself wholly to him. I shall love to die on his heart; neither life nor death shall ever separate me from it. O Eternal love, my soul sighs for you, and chooses you as its only master. O Savior of souls, grant that we may sing forever: 'Long live Jesus! I love Jesus. Long live Jesus whom I love! I love Jesus, who lives for ever and ever.'"

PRAYER.

Happy citizens of heaven who see the heart of Jesus as it is, and who love him without a rival obtain for me that I may know and love him as you love him and for ever.

O Jesus, during the whole of my life, but, above all, at the terrible hour of my death, open to me a secure refuge in the wound of your heart. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 374.)

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

THE LOVE OF JESUS FOR MEN.

“What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?”—Job, vii. 17.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us contemplate our Lord appearing to the Blessed Margaret, and saying to her: “Behold this heart which has so loved men!” With that holy nun, let us adore him thus manifesting to us, in a manner so calculated to move our hearts, the mystery of his love for us, and let us reflect on the characters of that love.

The world had no existence when, already, the Word of God loved us, and had decided, in his eternal decrees, to assume our nature and become one of us, to raise us to himself. He loved man before the first sin, and was pleased to manifest it, by appearing to him frequently, and conversing with him, and revealing to him all the truths that it was important for him to know. He loved him even after his sin, offering to become a victim in his place; telling him that he would come

and save him, announcing it thus by his prophet : “Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb ? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee.” *

When the time was fulfilled, he comes according to his promise, to dwell personally among us, and he does not cease to love us. In the womb of Mary, in the crib, in Egypt, at Nazareth, his heart is filled with the most lively affection for us ; and it was to be so even to the end of his life, as these words of the holy Gospel teach us : “Jesus having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” *

Yes, O divine Savior, you have always loved us, although by our offences we have saddened, scourged, crucified you. . . . In your love was stronger than death ; nothing could extinguish or even weaken its sacred fire ; and in your sacrament, as well as on your glorious throne, your heart burns for men with a loving that seems more intense and more beneficent as time rolls on, and the world draws to its end.

That love extends to all men. Ah ! how much love the heart of Jesus has for the just, whose souls are adorned with sanctifying grace, whose hearts are an image of his own, and who, by their fidelity, make themselves worthy to share in his heavenly inheritance.

He loved sinners also, not, it is true, as far as they are sinners, for that would be repugnant to his holiness, but in as far as they are men, or as far as they are Christians. “When as yet we were sinners. . . .

* Isa., xl ix. 15.

† St. John, xiii. 1.

Christ died for us,"* Says the Apostle; now to die for one is, according to the words of our Lord himself, the greatest mark of love that we can give! Let us recall to mind how our Savior acted as to the Samaritan woman, Zacheus, and Mary Magdalen; let us think of what he makes known of himself in the parable of the prodigal son or of the lost sheep, and let us ask ourselves if he loves souls under the yoke of sin.

Moreover, it was a fact so evident that the Pharisees made it a reproach to him, saying to his Apostles; "Why does your Master eat with sinners?"† His love for them was a subject of scandal to their pride. It was because, as he had objected to them, they did not understand these words of the Sacred Scripture: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,"‡ And it was because they did not know his heart, all whose sentiments are ruled by mercy and love.

That it is which explains his love for us, who are alas! tossed about by so many passions and filled with so many failings. O mystery of infinite charity! Our misery is so great that we should be a subject of horror in our own eyes, and yet the heart of Jesus loves us! Let us be then filled with astonishment, and exclaim with St. Bernard: "How can you love me, O my God, O my love? how could you allow me to love you?"

The love of Jesus for men is so surprising that many refuse to believe it: they cannot admit the thought

* Rom., v. 8, 9.

† St. Mark, ii. 16.

‡ St. Matt., ix. 13.

that they are the object of the affection of our Savior, that the Son of God become man sees in them his beloved brothers. Ah! it is because not knowing his heart, they wish to limit a love that has no limit.

The heart of Jesus loves us with a gratuitous, disinterested, generous love: How many examples, how many expressions in the Holy Scriptures teach us this. In one place, the divine Master calls little children to him and blesses them; in another, he is touched with compassion for a widow who weeps over her dead son; later on, he sheds tears over Lazarus in his grave; at the last supper, he addresses his disciples in language of the most touching tenderness, while he gives himself to them to be their food: in the garden of Olives, he speaks with the most loving sweetness to Judas himself.

O adorable heart, ocean of love, be thou forever blessed! "O Lord," exclaimed St. Gertrude, "if men knew how much you love them, if you showed them the riches of your love, they would all fall down at your feet." "No, no, it is not just," adds St. Liguori, that we should coldly love a God who has loved us with so much tenderness!"

The love of the heart of Jesus for us is an effective love, which is shown by the greatest and most admirable works. "O Lord," sings the Church, "it is your love that made you assume a mortal body, to restore to us as the second Adam what the first Adam had taken from us."* "O Jesus," exclaimed the seraphic St.

* Hymn. *Auctor beati saeculi.*

Francis of Assisium, "love made you come down from heaven to earth, and pass through the world like a man of no account. In your life, and in your death, you showed us only a boundless love. Your love prepared your cross, and fastened you to it; it made you its slave and victim."

It was the love of Jesus for us, which, as he revealed to Blessed Margaret Mary, was the cause of all he suffered. It was it that made him perform all the acts of his life, found and preserve his Church, with all the means of sanctification it offers us. It is that which keeps him with us in his sacrament of love, where he unceasingly receives his sacrifice and becomes our food; it is that which made him establish and spread in these latter days, devotion to his Sacred Heart, as he himself tells us by these words: "My heart enamoured with love for men can no longer contain the flames of its love; it has need to manifest itself to them, to enrich them with the treasures it contains."

Behold what is the love of the heart of Jesus! Ah! how can we think of it without extolling, thanking, and praising, that divine heart, and without feeling penetrated and filled with admiration, love, and gratitude, towards it.

APPLICATION.

Let us admire, thank, and love the heart of Jesus, let us proclaim its goodness, tenderness, and liberality.

Let us rejoice that we are the objects of that love whose characters we meditate on; for who has more

motives to do so than we religious ? Let us love Jesus, who has so loved us, and let us love him with all our hearts. Let us beg this grace of him most earnestly, and let us faithfully correspond to it. Yes, let us love; what is more just, reasonable, and salutary ?

Let us testify, by our conduct, that the sentiments of the divine heart find an echo in our souls. Let us seek only to please our beloved. Let us remember that love is kept alive by sacrifice, and let us enter into the sentiments of St. John Francis Regis, who said : "Life would be insupportable to me, if I had not to suffer something for Jesus Christ."

Let us offer our heart to the heart of Jesus, begging of him to take possession of it and reign there as sovereign.

Let love for Jesus be in us as a consuming fire destroying every tie of affection to creatures, and let it enable us to say in all truth : "My heart belongs no longer to me ; it belongs wholly to Jesus, who possessing it on this earth will communicate himself to it in heaven, and make it happy for ever.

PRAYER.

O heart of Jesus, accept the homage of my heart, filled with adoration and gratitude at the thought of thy love for us. Oh grant by thy grace, that loving thee with the most ardent and most constant love, I may obtain from thine infinite goodness the right to glorify thee in eternity with the angels and saints. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 374.)

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE VIRTUES OF THE HEART OF JESUS.

"Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart."—St.
Matt., xi. 29.

CONSIDERATION.

THE source of all the blessings of grace and eternity, containing within itself all the riches of heaven and earth, the fulness of greatness, beauty, and power, the heart of Jesus is, nevertheless, the humblest of hearts; for it lowered itself even to our nothingness.

Ah! who could measure the depth to which the Son of God has descended in assuming our nature? The Immortal puts on mortality, the Omnipotent becomes weak and miserable; the King of kings puts on the appearance of a servant, and fulfils all that had been announced by his prophets: "I am poor, and in labors from my youth;*" "I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people."†

O mystery that was to destroy in our souls, even to the last fragment, pride and self-love! Our Lord

* Ps., lxxxvii. 16.

† Ps., xxi. 7.

shows himself to us as a little child wrapt in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, then as a modest artisan earning his bread by the sweat of his brow! At the very time he enlightens his people with the light of the gospel, and manifests by numberless miracles that he is the Master of nature, he appeared nevertheless as the servant of all; and did not disdain to kneel at the very feet of Judas. Let us hear him saying to his disciples: "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth" * "I seek not my own glory" † "learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart;" then let us contemplate him crucified between two thieves, or hidden under the sacramental veils; and let us ask ourselves if humility was not, as it were, the foundation of his soul, and if his heart was not consumed by the desire of humiliation, and a thirst for sufferings.

The heart of Jesus is sweetness, goodness, and condescension itself. Never did it throb, even once, but from the most perfect love; its greatest joy was to do good to men, and lavish on them the marks of its affection, as the royal prophet had shown by saying of the Messiah: "The Lord is my light, my salvation; my strength, my shepherd, and my guide; the whole earth is filled with his mercy." ‡ The whole life of our Savior speaks to us of his meekness. He calls to him all men, just and sinners, rich and poor; and shows even more kindness to the latter than the former. His countenance, his words, his looks, have nothing harsh or repelling; on

* St. Luke, xxii. 27.

† St. John, viii. 50.

‡ Ps., xxvi. 1; xxx. 8; xxxii. 5.

the contrary they gladden and allure souls. Every one has access to him ; the crowd presses on him ; the sick block up the roads he has to pass over ; little children come to him, and not only does he not keep them from him, but they are the objects of his special affection.

How can we express his compassion for the unfortunate, and what it made him perform !

What a share he takes in the sufferings of men ! Ah ! does he not bear the whole weight of them, according to these words of Isaias : “ Surely he hath born our infirmities.”* Let us see him at the gates of the town of Naim, filled with pity for a widow who in tears follows the body of her son to the grave, and changing her sorrow to inexpressible joy by calling him to life ; let us see him in the desert casting his eyes on the multitude that had followed him, and saying to his apostles : “ I have compassion on the multitude, for behold, they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat, and if I shall send them away fasting to their own home, they will faint in the way ; for some of them came from afar off.”†

Let us remember that he spoke of himself under the image of the charitable Samaritan, who took care of the man that had fallen among thieves ; that with Martha and Mary he shed tears over the grave of Lazarus ; that he wept over Jerusalem, that unhappy city which, because it did not know the time of its visitation, was to be delivered up to ruin and desolation.

* Isa., liii. 4.

† St. Mark, viii. 2, 3.

How the compassion of his heart is exhibited in this touching lamentation : “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee ! How often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen gathereth her chicken under her wings, and thou wouldest not ! *

But if Jesus Christ compassionated our physical sufferings, how much more did he compassionate our moral evils ! If such was his commiseration for the body, what must have been his solicitude for the soul ! He wished our salvation, although he had to merit it by the most cruel sufferings, the most painful sacrifices, at the cost of his blood and life : “ I have a baptism,” said he, “ wherewith I am to be baptized : ” and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.” † The most ardent zeal consumed his heart from the first instant of his life until that moment, when exclaiming on the cross, “ I thirst,” he shewed that he was always burning with the desire to deliver us from the slavery of sin, and restore us to the friendship of God. He has been to us a shepherd full of kindness, going after the sheep that had gone astray until it was found, when, filled with the most lively joy, he lays it on his shoulders to bring it back to the fold.

Oh ! who can enumerate the prodigies of his mercy and clemency ? “ Who shall be able to declare his mercy ? ” ‡ His heart is open to all our miseries ; it is the refuge, the secure asylum of sinners, who of all men are the most miserable and the most to be pitied.

* St. Matt., xxiii. 37. † St. Luke, xii. 50. ‡ Eccles., xviii. 4.

He offers to all the grace of reconciliation and pardon, by urging them, in a thousand ways, to accept it and return to the path of virtue ; he shows himself infinitely liberal towards those, even, who have most abused his favors, and verifies in that sense these words of the Apostle : “ Where sin abounded, grace did more abound.” * He is never weary of pardoning the repentant sinner, however great may have been his offences.

He teaches us that the principal object of his coming into this world is the salvation of sinners ; that their return to virtue is his greatest consolation ; that “ there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just that need not penance.” †

Let us reflect on the generous pardon he accorded to all sinners who had recourse to him, and even to the thief, who, at the point of death, said to him : “ Remember me ? ” He asks them to believe in him and love him, and generally dismisses them these words : “ Go thy sins are forgiven thee ; but sin no more.” ‡

APPLICATION.

Let us reflect and ask ourselves if our heart is in conformity with that of Jesus.

Are we truly humble, rejecting every thought of vain-glory, personal esteem, contempt of our neighbor, envy, and jealousy ? Do we fight against self-love, and all the passions that compose its hateful train ?

* Rom., v. 20. † St. Luke, xv. 7. ‡ St. Luke, xxiii. 42.

Do we practice sweetness, being filled with goodness and condescension towards all, even when they have caused us suffering ? Is there nothing in our words and conduct chilling and repulsive, or of a nature to alienate hearts from us ? Do we compassionate the misfortunes of others, feeling for them, showing that we share in them, and doing all in our power to remedy them ? Do we not, on the other hand, continue indifferent to them, as if those who suffered were not our brethren, our second-selves ?

Does the condition of sinners awaken our pity ? Does it make us pray for them, and as far as obedience allows, employ ourselves with zeal in their conversion ? Are we merciful, pardoning all, as we wish the heart of Jesus to pardon us ?

Let us then reform our conduct and testify by our whole lives that we understand these words of our divine Master : “ Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls.”

PRAYER.

O Jesus, word of God, humiliated so far for love of us, O shepherd full of tenderness and compassion, O generous Savior, make my heart, I beseech thee like unto thine. Grant that I may imitate thy humility, thy sweetness, thy charity, and thy zeal ; so that, passing through earth doing good as thou requirest of me, I may be admitted to sing with the saints in heaven, thy never-ending mercies !

(See Résumés, page 375.)

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE JOYS OF THE HEART OF JESUS.

"In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Ghost."—
St. Luke, x. 21.

CONSIDERATION.

THE heart of Jesus rejoiced from the beginning, that the glory of his heavenly Father was to be brought about by the establishment and propagation of the Gospel. He thrilled with joy on the night when the angels sang above the crib in Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will,"* And when the works by which his Father was to be honored, praised, and served, by faithful souls, appeared to his mind.

What satisfaction our divine Savior experienced at the thought of all the good that was to be wrought through himself and his Church ! Let us recall to mind that day, when the apostles giving him an account of the happy success of their mission, he said to them: "I saw Satan as lightning falling from heaven," and

* St. Luke, ii. 14.
4*

adds the Evangelist: “In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Ghost, and said: ‘I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.’”*

He thought of all those who, by virtue of his cross, were to be adorers in spirit and in truth; he saw those legions of apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, religious, and holy persons of every rank, sex, and condition, who on earth would render to the heavenly Father, through him a worthy homage of adoration and love, and should merit to render it through a happy eternity.

He saw the projects of hell disconcerted, the empire of Satan overturned, and death vanquished; he saw human nature rising from its fall and walking by the light of faith in the path of truth and salvation. He saw the new Jerusalem peopled by that countless multitude of the elect “which no man could number,”† since their number exceeds that of the grains of sand on the seashore; and he heard the hymns of gratitude with which they would bless the divine mercy through all eternity.

Among the different subjects of joy to the heart of Jesus, arose, among the first, that caused by the conversion of sinners, as the holy Gospel gives us to understand when referring to the transports of gladness which the father of the prodigal son experienced at seeing his son, whose absence he had long deplored, or to those of the shepherd who brought back to the fold the lost

* St. Luke, x. 18, 21.

† Apoc., vii. 9.

sheep, or of the woman when she found the groat she had lost.

That heart, full of goodness and charity, experiences, even towards the greatest sinners, a love, compared to which that of the most tender of mothers to the best of sons, is but a shadow ; and, on that account, he experiences more happiness when one sinner is converted than the mother would if the son, she bewailed as dead, were restored to life.

O you who are still in sin, procure him the inexpressible happiness your conversion would cause him. Remember that he shed his blood for your salvation. Do not resist his divine inspirations; come to him who, moreover, can alone bring you repose, peace, and happiness ; and after having left your unhappy state, do not fall back into it.

The heart of Jesus rejoices at the perseverance of the just. Do we not see Our Lord in the Holy Scriptures rejoicing because of his servant Job; and in another place, saying, “I will leave me seven thousand men in Israel, whose knees have not been bowed before Baal.”* Has not the Lord caused it to be written of him in the second Book of Machabees : “In his servants he will take pleasure ?”†

And what consolation does his heart not find in those faithful souls that belong wholly to God and virtue, over whom he reigns as king, who are resplendent with the beauty of his grace, whom he sees washed by his blood, marked with the sign of the cross, and

* 3 Kings, xix. 18.

† Ch. vii. 6.

directing their steps towards the heavenly city, he merited for them ?

Ah ! let us judge of this by the expressions of his affection towards many of those : for instance, towards St. Bernard, St. Francis of Assisium, St. Theresa, St. Gertrude, and the Blessed Margaret Mary. What favors did he not heap upon them ! Did he not thereby show how much his heart was consoled by their fidelity and love ?

He dwells in the just as in a temple, and to dwell there, is to him the sweetest satisfaction, according to these words : “ My delight is to be with the children of men.” * Moreover, the just participate in his merits and enrich themselves more and more for heaven ; and it is, in that respect, a new subject of joy to his heart, so desirous of doing us good, so anxious to bestow on us from his fulness.

Courage then, O you who walk in the path of justice, the heart of Jesus rejoices on your account, and he begs of you to persevere or rather to advance in sanctity, that he may have the pleasure of enriching you more and more with his gifts.

What contentment does the realization of good, from the purest motives of faith, bring to his heart ! How he is pleased with the zeal of apostolic men, the regularity of good religious, the attraction towards him of so many souls who burn with the fire of holy charity, the piety of those who have embraced this worship of love, the propagation of that worship in the Church, the

* Prov., viii. 30.

fervor of persons truly devoted to the holy Eucharist, and who partake frequently, with the requisite dispositions, of the heavenly banquet to which he invites all men !

How he rejoices at the progress of the Gospel, whose light spreads everywhere throughout the world, and shines to the eyes of so many, who but yesterday were sitting in the shadow of death ! What a satisfaction to him when addressing his holy Church, he says to it : " Lift up thy eyes round about, and see : all these are gathered together, they are come to thee!"*

O Jesus, adorable Savior, zealous lover of souls, such are the joys of thy heart, and those joys are to you an occasion for addressing your Father in these words which the Church sings in her office : " According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul."†

Ah ! doubtless, many souls grieve you by resisting your grace ; but a multitude are faithful to it, and every day you see heaven filled with predestined souls. Architect of the new Jerusalem, you rejoice at beholding it rise more and more like an edifice near its completion, or rather at contemplating it such as it shall be on the great day, when the elect, who are its living stones, shall be all assembled near you, to share forever in your boundless felicity.

* Isa., lx. 4. † Office of the Sacred Heart; Ps., xciii. 19.

APPLICATION.

"Let us rejoice," says St. Liguori, "at the love for Jesus of so many persons whose affections centre in him." In imitation of his Sacred Heart let us make it our greatest satisfaction, to procure, or see others procure, the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Let nothing cause us more pleasure than the doing of good, either through ourselves or others.

Let us, by our conduct, be a consolation to the heart of Jesus. For this purpose, let us carefully avoid everything that displeases him; let us preserve our souls pure before him, and let us make it worthy, as far as possible, to be his sanctuary.

Let us faithfully practice, for love of him, the virtues of our holy state, and let us not cease to form ourselves to his likeness. Let us often raise our hearts towards him by ejaculatory prayers. Let us be penetrated with the most lively and most affectionate devotion towards the holy Eucharist. According to his desire, let us pray much for the conversion of sinners, remembering that this is an apostolate which all can exercise, and which is eminently profitable.

Let us be zealous for the sacred worship of which his heart is the object, and let us employ ourselves with ardor in assisting its propagation through the Church. Let us neglect no means to lead the hearts of our pupils towards that adorable heart.

He will be grateful to us for every joy we bring him, and through his grace he will bring us to that abode where the elect share in his endless happiness.

PRAYER.

O heart of Jesus, infinite love, I wish to desire only what thou desirest, and to rejoice only in what gives thee joy. Grant me, I beseech thee through the immaculate heart of Mary, that I may establish myself and persevere in these dispositions till death, so that being to thee a source of great joy in time, I may be such to thee also in eternity. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 375.)

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE SORROWS OF THE HEART OF JESUS.

"My heart hath expected reproach and misery."—Ps., lxviii. 21.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us meditate on the sorrows of the heart of Jesus, as the Church* herself invites us to do, by putting into the mouth of our divine Savior these words of the prophets: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be sorrow like to my sorrow;"† "My heart hath expected reproach and misery, and I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none."‡

The divine heart is inflamed with the desire of the glory of his Father and the salvation of souls; that is indeed the object of all his wishes, the end of all his designs. But few alas! second him, whilst a great number oppose him.

Oh how he is grieved at the blindness of those who follow the broad way whose end is destruction! It is on their account, O Jesus, that a cloud of sadness covers your adorable face; it is for them you wept in

* Office of the Sacred Heart. † Lament., i. 12. ‡ Ps., lxviii. 21.

the crib at Bethlehem, at the tomb of Lazarus, and at the gates of ungrateful Jerusalem, which did not know what could have brought it peace. It was by the sight of them that your heart was broken with sorrow, and that you said to your apostles : "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."* It was to merit the most powerful graces of conversion for them that you prayed with so many sighs and tears in the garden of Olives ; it was of their misfortune you spoke when you said to your Father : "Father, if thou wilt, remove this chalice from me."†

But what that divine heart suffered in the garden of Olives and on the cross, does it not suffer still, since sin does not cease to be committed in the world ? In what an ocean of bitterness is it plunged by the multitude of faults, infidelities, and crimes, of which this earth is the theatre, this earth which he had redeemed, purified, sanctified, by his sufferings, and by the blood and water which he shed upon the cross after his death ! With what a sword is he pierced by the wanderings of men, the slaves of their passions, of whom so great a number, according to the expression of Scripture, "drinketh iniquity like water !"‡

The heart of Jesus suffers because of the miseries of all sorts that assail us in this valley of tears ; for as St. Paul says : "We have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities ;"§ but we have one who shares in all our sufferings.

* St. Matt., xxvi. 38. † St. Luke, xxii. 42. ‡ Job, xv. 16.

§ Heb., iv. 15.

The heart of Jesus suffers through our little love and gratitude towards him. Therefore he said to the Blessed Margaret Mary, when showing her his five wounds: "If men made a return to me, all I have done for them would appear to me as little; but they have only coldness for me, they do not answer my eagerness but with slights."!

Love, which makes every advance, which exhausts, which sacrifices itself, and meets with no return, is necessarily an afflicted love: O! what affliction then is yours, O Sacred Victim, for where are those who love you sincerely, or who testify it by their conduct?

We religious, who are the object of the protection of our divine Master, we, whom he enriches with his graces, and to whom he shows, if we may say so, his infinite loveliness unveiled, have we a real love for him? We say to him frequently: "O Lord, I love you," but do our acts say so too? Let us judge thereof by our attention and fidelity to keep his holy law, to do every thing that we know to be his will. Ah! my God in recalling to mind the characteristics of true love, are we not obliged to confess, that we love but little that Savior who has so loved us?

The heart experiences some of its greatest sufferings from the outrages it undergoes in the sacrament of his love, and from the state of neglect of his holy table, in which alas! so many live, notwithstanding his pressing invitations and the exhortations of his ministers.

In what terms our Lord complains of this to the holy

nun through whom particularly, he wished to manifest his heart to us ! "Behold," said he, "this heart which has so loved men. . . . and in return I receive from the greatest number but ingratitude, for they do not cease to outrage me by their irreverences and sacrileges, by the contempt and coldness they have for me in my sacrament of love. What I feel most is, that they are hearts consecrated to me who used me so. Yes, my heart can complain in this mystery, as on the cross, that it is exposed to opprobrium, and grief without consolation."

The holy Eucharist is the master-piece of his love for men ; it ought, then, to be the object of the most ardent love, and the most lively gratitude of which they can be capable, and yet it is quite the contrary with a multitude of them. How many heretics and wicked men have spoken against the real presence of Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist ! How many profanations have been committed against his sacred body by the satellites of hell, who have trampled it under their feet, cast it into the dirt, and given the sacramental species, under which it is hidden, as food to animals !

Is not his passion continued in our sanctuaries ? Does he not find there everything that grieved him most at Jerusalem, even to the infamous kiss of Judas, whose imitators are those who communicate unworthily ? How sensible he is of the abandonment and isolation in which he is left in our churches. Very few persons, even of those who might do it so easily, go to adore him, thank him, and pray to him. It is considered a duty in the world to visit superiors, friends, and benefactors ; and

the good Savior, the heavenly friend, to whom we are indebted for all we have, and through whom alone we can be happy, is left in his prison of love.

O the ingratitude of men, who would not bewail thee from the depth of his soul ! Who would not shed tears of blood, at the thought that the greatest mark of the love of Jesus Christ, becomes, through the effect of our wickedness, the subject of the greatest sorrow to his adorable heart !

APPLICATION.

Our Lord speaking to the Blessed Margaret Mary, said to her : " Will no one have compassion on my sorrows, and be willing to share in them. My heart, in the abandonment in which it is left, seeks, with thee and a small number of fervent souls, some consolation ; I expect you to repair, by your homage, the injuries done to me,"

Let us strive to respond to his wishes. Let us compassionate his sorrow, and let our love for him make us share in it. Let us be grieved at all that grieves him, and for the same motives as he, weeping over every offence against God, and especially every profanation, every irreverence to the holy Eucharist.

Let us carefully avoid sin, the very shadow of sin, everything that can grieve the divine heart. . . . Ah ! that is not enough : we must do what can console him and gladden him ; we must, by our fervor, our piety, and our gratitude, be to him a consolation for all the wounds and all the insults he receives.

Let us be animated with zeal, to make that adorable heart known, loved, honored, and thanked; to cause the devotion to spread of which it is the object, and which is for us a means of procuring inexpressible contentment.

At the remembrance of the offences of men towards him, let us repair, in union with Mary on Mount Calvary, the insults, contempt, and blasphemies, of which he was the object on the part of his enemies. Let us console him, above all, by devoting ourselves to his service with all the powers of our soul, and by giving ourselves to him for ever.

PRAYER.

O heart of Jesus, adorable sanctuary of the love of God for men, why do we respond only by coldness and ingratitude to thy love for us?

Thou hast sacrificed thyself to save us; we owe thee an infinite gratitude, a love without limits; and alas! thy benefits are ignored, and thou scarcely findest any hearts to be faithful to thee.

Behold us deplored thy injustice! Ah! why can we not efface by our tears, or wash in our blood, all that can be to thee a subject of sorrow!

O merciful heart, pardon us, and grant, that, rendering thee love for love, we may merit to enjoy thy love in eternal life.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 376.)

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE WOUND OF THE HEART OF JESUS.

“One of the soldiers opened his side with a spear; and immediately there came out blood and water.”—St. John, xix. 34.

CONSIDERATION.

How eloquently the wound of the heart of Jesus speaks to us of the love of the Son of God for us! The work of our redemption was accomplished, all was consummated of what was necessary, on the part of our Savior, for the reconciliation of man with heaven; the divine Victim had expired; his heart had ceased to beat, but it had not ceased to love us. In it, love was stronger and it proved this by opening itself to shed the last drops of the divine blood, which, falling on the already purified earth, made it produce, through the long series of ages, the most numerous and most wonderful fruits of sanctification and salvation.

“All the wounds of Jesus,” says Pere Nouet, “are the characters of the book of life, which contains the science of the saints; but the wound of his heart makes us more learned than all the others; from it we learn best how God loved the world, and what has been the tenderness

and generosity of our divine Savior." It is to us also, of the greatest assistance: "All the wounds of the body of Jesus Christ," says the same author, "are palaces of refuge where the greatest criminals find a retreat; but that of the heart is the best and safest." Through it we penetrate into the sanctuary of eternal charity, where not only do we learn to know and to love; but where we are sheltered from the assaults of the enemy of our souls, and where we repose in the enjoyment of the greatest blessings.

Yes, the heart of Jesus is open to us; it is open to all men, and is always open: its wound was, in fact, made after death; now every wound made on a dead body never closes.

"St. Frances of Rome relates that she saw the wound of the heart of Jesus whence issued a stream of living water, and that she heard these words: "If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink; I wish to satisfy those who attend to my invitation: it is on that account I have opened my heart where I will receive them as in an asylum."

"O steel of the lance," exclaims St. Francis of Borgia, "in opening to me, by so glorious a wound, the heart of my Creator, in unveiling to me the sanctuary of that divine beauty, you have given me access to the asylum of salvation! O precious wound of the heart of Jesus, I fix my abode in you as in a safe harbor, and there I deposit, with the most entire confidence, all I possess, all I hope for."

The wound in the heart of Jesus is the opening to

that crevice of the rock where the dove flies to escape from the pursuit of the vulture, and in which she finds security, abundance, peace, consolation, and joy. How many saints have understood it, and have shared the sentiments of St. Bonaventure, who envied the steel that wounded that heart, and in the transport of his piety said, that in its place he would never have left it! How many could say with the pious Marie Eustelle : "Whilst waiting for the eternal day when my soul shall see Jesus, and enjoy his divinity, I deposit, I enclose, I hide, in the loving wound of his heart, my soul itself and its powers, my heart with its ardent desires, and all my affections, my thoughts, my memories, my joys, and sufferings."

The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests : * man needs a habitation, for he cannot be a wanderer and vagabond on earth. But where can he more advantageously make his abode than in the heart of Jesus, than in that palace where are all the riches, all the splendor, all the magnificence of heaven.

It is by the wound of the heart of Jesus that our wounds can be cured, which are sin and its consequences, or our tepidity, our little love and zeal for virtue, our want of confidence in the goodness of God, our discouragement in the obstacles we meet. And in truth from the heart of Jesus pierced by the lance, issues the blood that satisfies superabundantly for sin, the water which purifies souls, and the fires of charity which inflame faithful hearts.

* St. Matt., viii. 20.

What is more calculated to excite in us the tears of repentance, and awaken our fervor, than the contemplation of that heart which has never ceased to love us, although we have so often grieved it by our offences ! What is there more capable of reanimating our hope and our courage than the sight of that wound, by which are discovered the bowels of God's mercy, and which tells us that our Lord and our God has loved us without measure, and that, even, when we were his enemies. The wound of the divine heart procures for us the most inestimable advantages. "All the wounds of the body of Jesus Christ," says Pere Nouet, "are sources of grace, fountains of heavenly blessings ; but that of the heart is the most loving, the brightest, the most abundant, the most delicious. All are streams of purple, in which we plunge all the powers of our soul, to raise the value of our thoughts, our words, and our actions ; but that of the heart gives them a more lively brightness, a mere precious tint." From it have issued the water and blood from which the Church was formed during the sleep of Jesus on the cross ; from it come to us all the treasures of heaven.

I adore thee, O most holy wound, mysterious and superabundant source of all graces that flow upon the world. It is through thee that all honor is given to heaven. Thou art the beauty, the ornament of the Church, and the terror of hell. It is in thee that sinners find their pardon, martyrs their courage, virgins their chasity, families union and concord, and religious persons zeal for their perfection.

APPLICATION.

Following the example of the saints, let us contemplate and adore the wound of the divine heart: let us meditate on what it reveals to us of the love of Jesus Christ for men, and let us do, on our side, all that is in our power, to love truly, with our whole strength, that generous Savior.

Let us give to that Sacred Heart, whose wound poured forth blood and water, the source of our life and our salvation, all the homage that he desires to receive from the faithful.

Let us pray to him with fervor and confidence; let us say to our Lord with the Blessed Henri Suso: "O my crucified love, remember in my regard the charity of your most amiable heart: O Jesus, let your afflicted heart teach me to flee from, to despise, to hate, all earthly pleasures;" or, let us exclaim with St. Gertrude: "O my Jesus, my sweet hope, may your divine heart, afflicted for me, be the secure asylum of my soul. I beseech you by your pierced heart, to transpierce mine with the sword of your love."

Let us enter into that adorable heart; Jesus Christ himself invites us thither, by saying to us as to the Blessed Margaret Mary: "Behold the place of thy abode." Let us attend to this invitation, so that henceforth we may be able to say with that holy nun: "I do not remember to have ever left that amiable heart, where I generally find myself as in a burning furnace of pure love." Let us have recourse to that divine asylum,

especially when we are engaged with the enemy of our salvation ; let us bring to it our sufferings, our annoyances, our griefs, and we shall there find the remedy for our evils,—strength, courage, and true peace.

Let us always remember that the entrance to it is narrow, and that none but souls that are humble and detached from the things of earth, can easily enter.

Let us study, then, to become such, so that on the hour that will end our life, we may be able, while pressing the crucifix to our lips, to exclaim like Père Ravignan : “The opening of the heart of Jesus, what a beautiful gate by which to enter heaven !”

PRAYER.

O heart of my beloved Jesus, divine asylum, the entrance to which the lance has opened, and where I have neither to fear the vengeance of heaven nor the malice of hell, Oh ! allow me to hide myself in thee, there to forget the world, to forget myself ; allow me to repose from the fatigues of life, to lose myself at last therein for time and eternity. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 376.)

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE IMAGES OF THE HEART OF JESUS.

"It is the image of his goodness."—Wisdom, vii. 26.
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CONSIDERATION.

THE Church prescribes, encourages, and propagates, in a thousand ways, the respect paid to holy images, because they are worthy of honor on account of what they represent, and because they can powerfully aid the faith and piety of the faithful.

But, of holy images, which has more claims to our veneration than that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Ah, let us think on what is its object, on what it symbolises, on what it tells us of the sentiments and virtues of the divine Master, and on the effects which it produces in souls.

The object, which is here represented to us, is the heart of Jesus, that heart which, united hypostatically to the Word, is divine and worthy of all adoration; that heart which has felt all the affections, and has been the organ of all the sentiments of our Savior; that heart to which is referred, as to its source, that divine life which

was shed with so much generosity for our salvation; that heart which, in expiation of our sins, was agonized in Gethsamani and on Calvary, and which, pierced on the cross by the lance, poured forth the blood and water, which is the most precious treasure or rather the life itself of the Church.

Other images of our Savior show him to us in one state or another, they recall one or another of his actions: the image of the Sacred Heart shows him to us at once in all states, as well as in all the actions he performed, because all he has done has had, for its motive, that love of us of which his heart was the seat, and of which it is, moreover, the most touching and the truest symbol.

The heart is the emblem of love; the image of the heart of Jesus reminds us, then, of the infinite love of Jesus for his Father, and the immense, incomprehensible love he has had for us. Therefore, in contemplating it, the pious soul thinks on the goodness, the tenderness of our Savior, and repeats with the Apostle of the Gentiles: "He loved me, and delivered himself for me."*

The heart is also the emblem of the most heroic virtues. The image of the Sacred Heart reminds us, then, naturally, of the virtues of Jesus Christ: his clemency, his courage, his zeal, his ardent desire, to sacrifice himself to redeem us, his disinterestedness; it makes us remember that he has put himself into our place to undergo the punishment due to our iniquities,

* Gal., ii. 20.

and that he has given us all, by giving us himself, in the institution of the adorable Eucharist.

Not only is the image itself of the heart of Jesus of a nature to excite and feed our piety, but so also are its accessions. And in fact, the divine heart is generally represented surrounded by flames, surrounded by a cross, surrounded by a crown of thorns, wounded, and shedding some drops of blood. Now, all that speaks to us, in a wonderful manner, of the love of Jesus Christ, of what he suffers for us, of the outrages to which he is subjected in the sacrament of his love, and of the graces with which he favors us.

“Jesus Christ,” says the Blessed Margaret Mary, “gave me to understand that the cross, the crown of thorns, the nails, the instruments of his passion, signified that the immense love of his heart for men, was the source of all his sufferings; that from the first instant of his Incarnation, all the torments were present to him, and the cross was, if we may say so, planted in his heart; that he accepted then, all the sufferings that his most sacred humanity was to undergo during the whole course of his life, as well as all the outrages to which his love for men would expose him in making him dwell with them, until the end of the world, in the most holy Sacrament.”

The cross, the crown of thorns, the wound of the heart of Jesus, remind us still, that love lives by sacrifice; that to show ourselves truly grateful to Jesus Christ we must range ourselves under the standard of his cross, accept with resignation the sufferings and

miseries of this life, mortify our inclinations, lead a life of penance, and make ourselves, in heart especially, more and more like to the divine Victim of our redemption.

The images of the Sacred Heart contribute to awaken in our souls the noblest and most religious sentiments, to develop in our hearts love for Jesus Christ, gratitude for his favors, hope in his goodness, love for our neighbor, detachment from creatures, the spirit of sacrifice, repentance of our faults, the desire of perfection, and courage and strength to triumph over all temptation, and to persevere, faithfully until death, in the path our divine Master has traced out for us.

When we fix our eyes on an image of the Sacred Heart, our mind is illumined with a sweet light, and we have a better knowledge of the most holy soul of Jesus Christ; we unite, by our interior dispositions, more closely with him; we feel more keenly the offences done to him, and we resolve to be a consolation to him by our homages of love, piety, reparation, and fidelity, in his service.

One glance, cast on an image of the Sacred Heart, may be to us of the greatest service in temptations, for then we hear Jesus Christ say to us in the depths of our soul: "What! would you wish to wound a heart that has so loved you!"

How many motives, then, unite to lead us to look upon and venerate the images of the heart of Jesus! Besides, this sweet Savior himself enjoins it, as Blessed Margaret Mary teaches us in these words: "My

divine Master assured me that he takes a singular delight in seeing the interior sentiments of his heart honored under the figure of that heart of flesh, such as he had shown it to me, and whose image he wished to be exposed in public, so as to touch the insensible hearts of men. He promised me that he would shed abundantly on the hearts of those who venerated it, the treasures of his grace, and that to all places where that image should be exposed to be particularly venerated, he would bring down every kind of blessing."

APPLICATION.

With a view to please Jesus Christ and merit his graces, let us give to the image of his Sacred Heart the honor it deserves. Let us, as far as possible, act conformably to this advice of the pious Lansberg: "Have," says he, "for the purpose of encouraging your devotion, some image of the adorable heart of Jesus, fixed in a place where you can frequently see it, so that the sight of it may excite in you the fire of divine love; kiss that image with the same devotion with which you would kiss the heart of Jesus; enter in spirit into that deified heart, there ardently imprinting its image on your own, plunging your soul wholly into it, desiring to be absorbed in it, striving to draw into your heart the spirit that animates that of Jesus, his graces, his virtues, in a word, every thing life-giving in that heart which is the overflowing fountain of all blessings."

Let us distribute, with an enlightened zeal, images of the Sacred Heart, and let us neglect nothing to lead

our pupils to honor them, and to make use of them as a means to raise their souls to heaven.

Above all, let us labor to make of our heart an image truly resembling the heart of Jesus; that is to say, let us strive with all our strength to increase in charity, goodness, generosity, devotedness, and a spirit of sacrifice.

Happy are those whose hearts are like to the heart of Jesus! That resemblance makes them, during life, the object of the greatest liberality on the part of God, until it serves as their title on the day of death, to the eternal possession of that sovereign good.

PRAYER.

How sweet it is to me, O my Jesus, to venerate the image of thy Sacred Heart, whose reality is given to us in thy sacrament! While looking on that sacred image, I recall to mind thy love and thy sufferings, and then as the tears fill my eyes, I feel forced to exclaim with St. Liguori: "I love thee, O most sweet Jesus; I love thee more than all things; I love thee more than my life, O my God, my love, my all."

O Mary, my hope, thou hast all power with God; obtain for me that I may become, even till death, a faithful servant from pure love to Jesus, so that, at my last moment, my heart may be found conformable to his divine heart, and that thus I may be admitted to contemplate with thee, that sun of charity for ever and ever. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 377.)
5*

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

RELIGIOUS AND THE DEVOTION TO THE
SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

"If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink."—
St. John, vii. 37.

CONSIDERATION.

How dear to men, especially to us religious, should be that devotion which has for its object the adorable heart, and the feelings of the Savior God to whom we are consecrated, whilst it has at the same time as its end, to develop in our souls love for that divine Master, to lead us to imitate his virtues, and make reparation for the insults offered to him, the irreverences and ingratitude he receives from men in the sacrament of his love !

Ah ! how could we but embrace with ardor that holy worship, whose principal practices are our union with the interior dispositions of Jesus Christ, the pious celebration of the feast of his Sacred Heart, communion of reparation, hearing holy mass, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, the offering of our homages of adoration and

reparation to Jesus in the adorable Eucharist, and veneration of the images of the Sacred Heart; all things which belong to the very essence of the holy life to which we have been called!

Our Lord himself shows us that we ought to be the models and apostles of devotion to his Sacred Heart. Did he not establish it by the ministry of a nun, who was a perfect model of all the virtues of her sublime vocation? Did he not say to her: "Recommend this devotion to ecclesiastics and religious persons, as a means of attaining to the perfection of their state."

Besides it is not reasonable that the worship of love towards Jesus Christ, and of reparation for the insults offered to him, should be particularly professed by those who have most experienced the effects of his love; and who, living in the greatest intimacy with him, ought to feel most keenly everything that afflicts his divine heart?

Moreover, how many and what precious advantages we find in it! Devotion to the Sacred Heart makes us study the interior dispositions of Jesus Christ, the sentiments with which he was animated, the motives from which he acted, the ends he proposed to himself, the virtues of which his adorable heart was the seat, and of which it is to us the symbol. It makes us acquainted with that justice which authorized him to challenge his enemies to convict him of sin, that sweetness which made him receive, even with tenderness, the greatest sinners, that humility which led him to descend to our nothingness, that love of poverty which left him

so poor that he had not whereon to lay his head, that obedience which fastened him to the cross; and that love, whose flames consumed him and made him its victim on Calvary and on our altars.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart gives us an intimate knowledge of the adorable model of the predestined, whose features, religious in particular, should reproduce. It makes us admire him and love him, and it, thereby, leads us to imitate him faithfully; for love desires to resemble the object of its affections.

It makes us attentive to what he requires of us, and makes us perform it from the purest motives, until we can say to him with St. Liguori: "Because I love you, O my Jesus, I prefer your will to my interests, or rather, my pleasure is to please you, my treasure, and my all; I will love you only, and I will love you for ever: all I wish for, is you alone."

It makes us enter resolutely on the path of self-denial and penance to which he calls us by these words: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."* What did he now work in this respect in Blessed Margaret Mary! Let us judge of it by these lines which she wrote to her director, in which she manifests a Christian heroism, which astonishes and fills with amazement even the most courageous souls. "My Father," wrote she to him, "nothing can give me pleasure in this world but the cross of my Master, a cross like his, heavy, ignominious, without sweetness, without solace. . . . My portion

* St. Luke, ix. 23.

will be to be on Calvary, until my last breath, without consolation or pleasure, but that of having none. . . . I beseech you to beg that adorable Savior not to deprive me of the happiness of suffering; for that is the only enjoyment I find in the weariness of my exile."

Devotion to the Sacred Heart makes us esteem the hidden life, the exterior retreat. It leads us likewise to the practice of fraternal charity, obedience, poverty, silence, purity, humility, or rather of all the virtues of our vocation. Not only does it prevent relaxation of fervor and tepidity in us, by making us understand how deeply sins of religious, and negligence in the performance of their duties afflict the divine heart; but it makes us desire and efficaciously wish to be of the number of those souls who are a true consolation to him by their fervor. It makes us docile to the voice of grace, by which Jesus says to us, as to St. Gertrude: " You have long enough gathered the honey of the consolations of this world among thorns; return to me, and I will inebriate you from the torrent of my delights." It inspires us to pray, to obtain the grace of being faithful to all our obligations, and makes us say, with the greatest desire of being heard: " O adorable heart, heal my soul of its tepidity; communicate to my poor heart, so cold, so cowardly, so indifferent, the holy ardor with which you are inflamed."

Besides, has not our Lord said that religious persons would derive so much assistance from devotion that they would need no other means to reëstablish primitive fervor in the worst regulated communities, and to lead

those that live in great regularity to the height of perfection ?

Happy, then, are the religious who are devout to the Sacred Heart ! They will not be long in possessing, if they do not already possess, the dispositions of Blessed Margaret Mary when she said to our Lord : “ O my love, I will try to keep myself submissive to you, and to subject everything that is in me to you, by doing what I shall believe to be most perfect, and most glorious to your Sacred Heart, for which I promise to spare nothing that is in my power, and to refuse to do or suffer nothing that can make you known, loved, and glorified.”

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is not only no additional burden to us ; but it facilitates and makes more profitable to us the means of sanctification made use of in our holy state ; vocal prayers, mental prayers, assistance at holy mass, communions, examinations of conscience, spiritual readings, conferences, &c, everything is done through it better and more willingly ; it sheds over all our pious exercises a sweet perfume, an agreeable unction which makes us appreciate them, love them, and perform them well.

It supplies what we cannot do. Thus, when St. Gertrude was afflicted at not being able to pray, and was saying to herself : “ Alas ! what fruit can I expect from such a prayer said with so much distraction ? ” Our Lord, to console her, presented her his heart, and said to her : “ Behold my heart, the delight of the most holy Trinity, and, through which you will be able to

supply whatever is wanting to you. Recommend all your actions to it with confidence, and it will make them perfect in my eyes."

APPLICATION.

As religious, let us be devout to the heart of Jesus, studying, meditating on, proclaiming, its perfections, its virtues, giving it love for love; acting always in union with it; invoking it in all circumstances, and above all, - in our times of trial; embracing, according to the spirit of our rules, the practices of devotion of which it is the object, and which are so efficacious in producing the fruits of grace and holiness.

Let us contribute, as far as possible, to make the divine heart loved, thanked, and adored, in our community, so that we may all participate in its treasures, and that inflamed by the fire of his charity, we may live here below only by him and for him, while waiting to love in him, in the city of God.

PRAYER.

O heart of my Jesus, "for the love of whom I have fled from the world and its delights," divine lover, who by thy influence drew me into religion, grant, I beseech thee, by the intercession of the saints, who were most devout to thee; that my union with thee may be more and more intimate, and that, by the light, the strength, and the unction, of which thou art the superabundant source, I may faithfully fulfil all the duties of my holy state, and may become worthy to see and bless thee through eternity. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 377.)

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER AND THE SACRED
HEART.

"Suffer the little children to come unto me."—St. Mark, x. 14.

CONSIDERATION.

How much reason a Christian teacher has to entertain great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to neglect nothing to inspire it into the minds of pupils!

He needs, and in a remarkable degree, sweetness, humility, goodness, patience, condescension, and self-denial, now he has a perfect model of these in the Sacred Heart of the divine Master who has said: "learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart;" who, for us and our salvation, humbled himself even to our nothingness; who suffered every kind of suffering and ignominy without ceasing to love those who caused them; who taught his holy doctrine with the sweetest goodness, without ever desponding at the stupidity, ignorance, or as it often happened, bad will, of those to whom he broke the bread of his divine word.

The teacher needs to have a love for children, but

a love pure, universal, courageous, and persevering. He must love them or undergo the penalty of not being loved by them, and of consequently having no influence over their hearts ; but he must love them upon supernatural motives, through grace and not through sympathy, with a view to what they are in the eyes of faith, and not because of the qualities of body, mind, or heart, with which they may be endowed. He ought to love them for God, for eternity, and not for himself or for time. He ought to love them all, to open his heart to each one of them, not to suffer in himself any antipathy resentment, or aversion, and even constrain himself to love those most, whom nature inclines him to love least. He ought to love them with the love of a kind father or affectionate mother, who live only for their children, and who make it their happiness to sacrifice themselves for them.

Ah ! is not that the same thing, as to say, that the model and source of this love is the heart of Jesus, that good Master who has said : “ Suffer little children to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.”* What love he has for them ! With what tenderness does he show it to them !

Yes, O divine Savior, you love children, because of what they are through you. You love their souls, adorned with thy grace, and destined for heaven. You love in them your heavenly Father, whose image they are, and who has so much love for them. Let your heart communicate then to ours, the fire of that heavenly

* St. Mark, x. 14.

love, which will have as its effect, to animate us with the most ardent zeal for their sanctification.

Oh ! how much you desired their salvation, since to procure it you became a child and did not cease to pray, labor, and suffer ; since to be their model you grew in wisdom and grace before God and men. You confided them to the care of thy angels, and to keep from them whatever might injure them, you pronounced this terrible anathema : “ He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea.”*

Devotion to the Sacred Heart, causes the teacher, therefore, to contemplate the model of all the virtues of his state ; it is, besides, a means for him to have courage, strength, and constancy, to practice them as he ought.

Did it produce only its principal end which is to develop in us love for Jesus Christ, should we not wish, even at the price of the greatest sacrifices, to be meek, humble, charitable, zealous, etc., in all our intercourse with childhood and youth ? Every master that loves Jesus Christ truly, cannot fail to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, desiring, with all the ardor of his soul, to make him known, adored, and served ; laboring with all the activity possible and by the surest means, to lead to him those children for whom that divine Savior has so tender an affection, and on whom it is his delight to pour forth his favors.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart has also as its effect, to

* St. Matt., xvii. 6.

develop in us the spirit of piety. The teacher who practices it, cannot but be a man of prayer, whose fervent supplications obtain from the divine Master, all the graces he stands in need of, for the due discharge of his employment.

What good then it works by the efficacy of the heavenly benedictions it draws down upon his labors. "My divine Master," says Blessed Margaret Mary, "gave me to understand that those who labor for the salvation of souls, will have the art of moving even the most hardened hearts, and will labor with a marvellous success if they themselves are penetrated with a tender devotion to his Sacred Heart."

Let us strive, then, to make progress in that devotion to which are attached promises, so magnificent and so calculated to make impression on a soul desirous of glorifying God and practicing virtue.

Let us make it known to our pupils, and let us lead them to embrace its practice. Let us speak to them frequently of the love of Jesus Christ for men, and let us eagerly and gladly seize upon every occasion to make them admire and bless the goodness, the tenderness, the generosity of our divine Redeemer, whose heart burns with love for them, and who has shed all his blood to deliver them from eternal death.

In inspiring them with devotion for the Sacred Heart, we are laboring in the most direct and most profitable way, in the important work of their education: for what is the very essence of that work but the training of the heart? Now what means can be imagined that

could more efficaciously realize that end, than to place the hearts of the children under the divine influence of the heart of Jesus; than to make them study and admire that model of hearts; than to make them pray to obtain the grace of forming theirs like to his?

Yes, let devotion to the Sacred Heart be truly practiced in a class, and by it the children will be powerfully aided to correct themselves of egotism, harshness, jealousy, disdain, conceit, &c; and to acquire the virtues which alone constitute true greatness, charity, goodness, modesty, humility, purity, generosity, &c.

How many motives, then, are there that combine to make us embrace, with affection, the worship of love so beautiful, so sublime, and so productive of the fruits of grace!

APPLICATION.

Let us be all zeal for the heart of Jesus, if we wish really to do good.

Let us study the virtues of what it is the model, and see if they are manifested in our conduct. Let us examine, if we share in his charity, his goodness, his sweetness, and his generosity: let us reflect on what we ought to do for that purpose, and let us do it exactly. Oh if our heart were itself the image of that of Jesus, what salutary influence should we not exercise over our pupils!

Let us often speak to that adorable heart of what we stand in need of as teachers, of all that can contribute to our success. Let us put our class under its

protection, and beg of Jesus to grant us the grace to labor efficaciously in the work of the sanctification of the souls confided to us.

Let us devote ourselves to that work, in union of dispositions with him, acting from the same motives and for the same ends that our divine Savior would in our place.

Let us neglect nothing that can lead our pupils to love, honor, and pray to the heart of Jesus, to second his views upon them, and to imitate him faithfully. Let us be good towards him, for "devotion to the Sacred Heart ought to insinuate itself sweetly, by the unction of charity, into the hearts which God has destined for himself."

Let us thus merit to be the object of the blessings of which the Blessed Margaret Mary speaks, saying, "Our Lord discovered to me the treasures of love and grace for those who should consecrate themselves to his adorable Heart, to procure it all the honor, love and glory, in their power; but they were treasures so great that it is impossible for me to describe them."

PRAYER.

O heart of Jesus consumed with zeal for the salvation of souls grant me, I beseech thee, to share in thy divine dispositions, and to work efficaciously, to gain to thee and attach to thee the hearts of the children thou hast confided to me, so that, having seconded thy designs over them and me, I may merit to experience the effects of thy mercy in time and eternity. Amen.

(See Résumés, page 378.)

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

THE LESSONS OF THE HEART OF JESUS.

"It is great glory to follow the Lord."—Eccles., xxiii. 38.

CONSIDERATION.

THE heart of Jesus has become our teacher; it teaches us, in the manner best calculated to reach our souls, the holy truths that ought to be the rule of our conduct; it makes us hear a language which pure and docile hearts understand, and which enlightens, warms, rejoices, and transports them.

The first lesson of the adorable heart has as its object, love towards God, that virtue which is first in excellence, which causes the beauty and lustre of the soul, and makes us worthy of heaven. It is to us its perfect model; for who could understand the extent and intensity of the love with which he is inflamed towards his heavenly Father, and which those words reveal: "I love the Father." *

It is from this love, as from its source, that proceeded every desire, every impulse of his heart; it is to that love as their end, they tended.

* St. John, xiv. 31.

The love of the divine heart was not a simple love of sentiment; it was also active, and it was, above all, by devotedness and sacrifice, that it manifested itself "That the world may know," says Jesus Christ to his apostles, "that I love the Father . . . Arise, let us go hence." And whither does this God of love go? To his passion and death.

The divine heart teaches us, also, all our other duties towards God, and especially, adoration, conformity to his holy will, obedience to his law, and gratitude. Has not our Lord said to us by himself or by his prophets. "I honor my Father."* "As the Father hath given me commandment, so do I."† "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work."‡ "Father . . . Thou hast loved me before the creation of the world."§

Along with love towards God, the heart of Jesus also teaches us love towards our neighbor. Thus he teaches us: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."||

Ah! what a model of the fulfilment of that precept is his adorable heart! He has not only observed it in perfection, but he has gone beyond it; for he has loved us more than himself! And even now, not being able to

* St. John, viii. 49. † St. John, xiv. 31.

‡ St. John, iv. 34. § St. John, xvii. 54.

|| St. Matt., xxii. 37-39.

contain the ardor of his love, he shows his heart to us, to enrich us with the treasures it contains.

The love of the heart of Jesus for men, is a love, pure, disinterested, tender, and universal ; a benificent, liberal and generous love, which has been testified by a self-sacrifice, more sublime than would be all the acts of heroism together that have been or will be performed in the world, and all that the most noble and most generous souls could conceive. Let us remember that, being the Holy of holies, he has nevertheless been “made a curse for us”* who were his enemies, and that he desired, with the most ardent desire, that baptism of blood, by which he was to reconcile us with heaven.

Let our hearts then, in imitation of his, love our neighbor with a true love ! Far from us be every antipathy, rancor, and coldness ! Let charity destroy egotism, jealousy, and the susceptibility arising from pride in our souls ; and substitute, in their stead, goodness, condescension, amenity, and a willing to perform a kindness.

Let us act with the greatest sweetness towards our neighbor : the heart of Jesus asks this of us, and is, at the same time, our example.

How this admirable virtue shines forth in all the words and actions of our Savior, and which he has honored by saying it : “Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the land!”† Let us contemplate him fulfilling his holy mission ; grace is on his lips, goodness shines in his eyes, his arms open to receive all men,

* Gal., iii. 13.

† St. Matt., v. 4.

and even the most guilty are welcome with the greatest kindness. He wishes that meekness should be the distinctive character of his disciples: thus when the son of Zebedee, indignant that a town of Samaria would not receive him, asked him: "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them," he repressed their excessive zeal, and "rebuked them saying: "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save."*

The spirit of his holy religion is essentially a spirit of peace and meekness, and whoever possesses it, acts, on all occasions, conformably to these evangelical maxims: "Be ye, therefore, merciful, as your Father also is merciful;"† "Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be guilty of the judgment;"‡ "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray them that persecute and calumniate you."§

The heart of Jesus teaches us, at the same time humility, for the divine Master has said: "Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart."||

Son of God, equal to God, he has become the servant of man; he has wished to be poor, unknown, despised, ranked with criminals, and nailed to an infamous cross. Oh! how his example is calculated to lead us to the practice of humility! It is the same with his doctrine in which he tells us: "When you shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unpro-

* St. Luke, ix. 54-56. † St. Luke, vi. 36. ‡ St. Matt., v. 22.

§ St. Matt., v. 44. || St. Matt., xi. 29.

fitable servants,"* "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into it;"† "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."‡

O sublime lessons! Why do we not understand them as so many of the true servants of God have understood them! "Observe," says Augustine, "that our divine Savior does not say to us: 'Learn of me to work miracles,' but to be meek and humble of heart; take notice that he speaks of sweetness and humility existing in the heart, and that, consequently, it would not be sufficient to have the appearance, the exterior marks of these virtues."

Finally, let us consider that these lessons of charity, sweetness, and humility, continue to be given to us by the heart of Jesus in the sacrament of our altars, where he burns with love for his heavenly Father and for men; where he manifests only goodness and mercy, where he annihilates himself more profoundly than on the cross.

APPLICATION.

Being religious, obliged by our state to lead towards perfection, let us study the heart of Jesus, and make every effort to reproduce its divine characters.

Let us imitate it: nothing is more important for our advancement in the path of sanctity and happiness. Let us here listen to the Blessed Margaret Mary: "The soul that is most humble and most despised," says

* St. Luke, xvii. 10. † St. Mark, x. 15. ‡ St. Luke, xiv. 11.

she, “will be that which will enter farthest into the sacred abode of the heart of Jesus; the one most stripped of every thing, will be the one that will possess most; the one most mortified will be most enriched with favors; the most charitable will be the best loved; the most silent, the best instructed; the most obedient will be that which will have the most influence and power over him.” Now what is that but to say, that the most faithful imitators of that adorable heart will receive the greatest proofs of his infinite liberality ?

Let us ask of the divine heart the grace to understand his lessons well, and the firm will to put them in practice.

PRAYER.

“O adorable heart of Jesus ! give me a heart like to thine in sentiment, a humble heart that knows and loves its own nothingness; a patient heart, that keeps master of itself, and calms down all agitation ; a charitable heart that compassionates miseries, and is anxious to relieve them ; a pure heart, that take alarm at the appearance, at the very shadow, of sin ; a heart detached from the false goods of earth, and sighing only for the lasting possessions of heaven ; a heart inflamed with love for its God, making him all its occupation, its only treasure on earth.”*

(See RÉSUMÉS. page 378.)

* Abbé Baudrand.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

THE DESIRE OF THE HEART OF JESUS.

"Our Father . . . thy kingdom come."—St. Matt., vi. 10.

CONSIDERATION.

ANIMATED with the most lively and the most ardent charity, the heart of Jesus has desired, and with a most vehement desire, the glory of his heavenly Father and the salvation of souls: that was the object of all its aspirations, all its wishes. From its first throb to its last, it repeated, by its dispositions, this divine prayer: "Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

It desired that the Father should everywhere find adorers in spirit and in truth, that his holy religion should be propagated over the whole world, and make of all nations but one nation, so that all men, giving glory to the adorable Trinity, might burst the bonds of satan, and attain to their eternal destiny.

That desire our Savior manifested in different ways: "I must be about my Father's business."* "The har-

* St. Luke, ii. 49.

vest indeed is great, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send laborers into his harvest."* "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be made one fold and one shepherd."† On the cross he exclaimed: "I thirst,"‡ and revealed, to us by those mysterious words, not only the torment he experienced in his body, but still more, what he suffered in his soul which was eager that all men should profit by his sacrifice, and become worthy of that heaven whose gates he opened to them.

That desire made him wish for, and employ, the means calculated to obtain its object. It was that desire that led him to sacrifice himself for us, and made him say, in speaking of his passion: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?"§ It was that desire which made him pray to his heavenly Father in our behalf: saying, "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me."|| It was that desire that made him found his Church, to which he has confided the treasures of his sacraments, and the merits of his labors, his sufferings, and his death, so that men may find in it all that is necessary for the work of their sanctification.

The heart of Jesus, by the very fact that it so ardently desires our salvation, burns with the desire of seeing us make use of the means that can procure it,

* St. Luke, x. 2. † St. John, x. 16. ‡ St. John, xix. 28.

§ St. Luke, xii. 50. || St. John, xvii. 24.

and which are, especially, detachment from creatures, the gift of our heart to God alone, fidelity to grace, the spirit of prayer, and devotion to the holy Eucharist.

He desires to possess our heart and to reign there as sovereign : "My son," says he to us, "give me thy heart. Behold me at the door of your heart and I knock : open to me that I may enter and may establish myself there as in my temple, I am a jealous God ; I have caused myself to be called the God of hearts. Besides, is not your heart my work ? Is it not also my conquest ? Have I not purchased it at the price of my blood ?"

But, Lord, what condescension to address us so ! And even were it so, could the heart of man satisfy you ? What treasure is it we conceal under this little dust of which you can be so jealous ? There is here evidently a mystery of your infinite goodness :

"What does Jesus seek in the crib, and on the hay of the stable of Bethlehem," asks a pious author.* "What does he ask by his tears and lamentations ? Hearts that will love him.

"What does he seek in Palestine, passing from city to city ? What is the object of so much fatigue and suffering ? To gain the hearts of men, to make them love him.

"What does he seek when he sacrifices himself on the cross, institutes his holy sacrament, and by a last excess of love reveals his heart to men ? He seeks hearts.

"But is that desire fulfilled ; and of the multitude of

* Pere Nouet.

hearts, every one of which clings to what it loves, how many are there that cling to Jesus alone?"

The heart of Jesus desires that we should be docile to grace, and repeats to us these words of the Psalmist: "To-day if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts;*" he desires that we should labor effectually to correct our faults, to acquire the virtues of our state, so that we may fully fulfil this maxim of the Gospel: "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.†

The heart of Jesus desires that we should have a most affectionate devotion to the passion. Oh! how our divine Savior wishes that we should nourish our souls with the affectionate remembrance of his sacrifice on Calvary! Is not that one of the ends for which he wished that that sacrifice should be renewed every day upon our altars, in a mystic manner, and that every thing in his Church should remind us of his cross, his sufferings, and his death? Speaking to the Blessed Veronica of the order of St. Augustine, he said to her: "I desire that men should give to my passion the worship of a sincere sorrow and a lively compassion for my sufferings. Should they shed but one tear they may be sure they have done much, for the tongue of man could not express the joy that one tear would give me."

The divine heart desires that Christians should be very devout to the adorable Eucharist.

Our Lord said to the Blessed Margaret Mary: "I

* Ps., xciv. 8.

† St. Matt., v. 48.

have an ardent thirst to be honored and loved by men in the holy Sacrament, and yet I find scarcely any one who strives, according to my desire, to quench this thirst by making some return to me."

He wishes that all the children of the Church should partake of the holy banquet he hast prepared for them. "Come," says he to them, "for all is ready." Addressing himself to his ministers, he says to them: "Go . . . into the highways and as many as you shall find invite."* The refusal to come to his divine banquet grieves him deeply, whilst, on the contrary, his heart experiences the greatest pleasure to see us there frequently, as St. Liguori expresses it, saying, that a soul can do nothing more agreeable to Jesus Christ than to receive him frequently in holy Communion, with the requisite dispositions.

"That loving heart has a boundless desire to be known and loved by men, over whom he wishes to establish his empire, so as to be able to provide for all their wants."† In his goodness and mercy he urges Christians to consecrate themselves to him, to love him with all the affection of which they are capable, and to repair, as far as they can, the outrages done to him in his sacrament of love, assuring them that these practices were eminently advantageous and salutary.

Happy the souls that respond to his designs! Enriched with graces they do much good; they advance in sanctity and make themselves worthy of the happy-

* St. Matt., xxii. 9.

† Blessed Margaret Mary.

ness promised in these words of our divine Master : “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice : for they shall have their fill.”*

APPLICATION.

Let us not confine ourselves to considering, in a general way, the wishes of the heart of Jesus ; but let us think on those that refer to ourselves personally. Let us listen to the voice of our divine Master in our soul : does he not address some complaint to us ? Does he not call on us to correct such or such a failing, to practice such or such a virtue, to perform such or such an exercise better ; to avoid, more carefully, the occasion of sin ; to observe, more exactly, recollectedness, modesty, and exterior retreat ?

Let us hasten to do what he requires of us : let nothing be dearer to us than the realization of his designs in our regard, for they are the designs of mercy, whose end is our sanctification, and consequently, our eternal happiness.

PRAYER.

O heart of Jesus who art consumed with zeal for the glory of God and our salvation, grant me, I beseech thee, to know what thou requirest of me, and deign to give me the grace to accomplish it faithfully, so that I may merit to be the object of thy mercy and munificence, in time and eternity. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 379.)

* St. Matt., v. 6.
6*

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION

RE COURSE TO THE HEART OF JESUS.

"Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened."—St. Matt.,
xi. 28.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us have recourse, with the most entire confidence, and on every occasion, to the heart of Jesus. "We shall find in that adorable heart," says St. Peter Damian, "all the arms fit for our defence, all the remedies that our maladies require, the most powerful succor against the assaults of our enemies, the sweetest consolations, the purest delights, and such as are most capable of filling our soul with joy."

"The treasures of blessings and graces which the heart of Jesus contains," says blessed Margaret Mary "are infinite. Have recourse to that heart. You will there find the strength necessary not to be disheartened or troubled about anything, not even your failings, for which you ought to humble yourself; but never be discouraged.

"Make your abode in that adorable heart; bring

there your uneasiness and sufferings, and all will be there pacified ; you will find there the remedy for all your evils, and your shelter in all your necessities.

“ If you are in an abyss of weakness and misery, the heart of Jesus is an abyss of mercy and strength ; if you are in an abyss of dryness and feebleness, it is an abyss of power and love. . . . If you desire to protect yourself against the danger of a bad death, and to secure the grace of final perseverance, it is in the Sacred Heart you will find a place of refuge : if you fear the severities of judgment, have recourse to him. Oh ! how sweet it is to die after persevering devotion to the heart of Him who is to judge us ! Yes, in every thing, and every where, plunge into that ocean of love and charity ; and, if it is possible, do not depart from it until you are penetrated with the love with which that heart is inflamed for God and men.”

There are in the heart of Jesus infinite treasures : graces of light, graces of strength, graces for every situation and for all sorts of persons It is an inexhaustible source of all the blessings we can desire.

The heart of Jesus is the refuge of all who are unfortunate, it is particularly so of sinners, who are, in truth, the most unfortunate of men. It shares in all our sufferings and feels them as its own. Let us remember the sentiments of goodness and commiseration that our Savior manifested at every sight of sufferings ; how many acts of his holy life represent him by our miseries, and eager to remedy them !

Let us hear the Church speaking of our divine

Redeemer: "His compassions," says she in her office, "will equal his tenderness, for his heart despises or rejects none of his children. The Lord is good to those who hope in him, and who seek him in the sincerity of their soul."

Often in our sufferings, our sadness, our weakness, we say to ourselves: "Where shall I find a heart to understand mine?" Why do we not go to the foot of the tabernacle, before that prison of love where He dwells for us who alone is our repose and true joy? There is a heart which will understand ours, and will be always a consolation to it.

He wishes us to have recourse to him. He engages us, he presses us to go to him to draw from his treasures. "Come to me," says he, "all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you.*

"How beautiful are those words," says St. Basil of Seleucia! 'Come all to me, I do not put limit to my promises: my heart is an inexhaustible source of goodness. Come all to me, my heart is large enough for all: the sea of my mercy is great enough to receive all sinners.'"

The true servants of Jesus Christ have heard that appeal and made haste to respond to it.

One day that the Blessed Margaret Mary was laying before our divine Savior her weakness, her powerlessness to fulfil his designs, he said to her: "Put thy will into the wound of my heart, and it will there find the strength to conquer itself;" to which the holy sister

* St. Matt., xi. 28.

replied: "Carry it far into your heart, O my God, and place it so securely there that it may never depart thence."

It has been so with all the saints; their souls were always strengthened and comforted by the contact with the heart of Jesus, with which theirs had the closest union. Like us, in this life of warfare and misery, they were a mark for contradiction, for temptations, for interior trials, infirmities, and sickness; like us, they were often in sadness and tears; but they had recourse to the heart of the divine Master, and that heart delivered them from their sufferings, or what was better, communicated to them the strength and courage to support them with faith, resignation, and love; and even the desire of suffering still more, so as to have more resemblance of Him.

It was from their relations with the heart of Jesus that St. Francis of Assisium, St. Teresa, St. Francis Xavier, St. Magdalen of Pazzi, and blessed Margaret Mary, drew that love for the cross which is the sublimity of Christian heroism, and which made them say to their divine Savior: "O my crucified love, may I be crucified with you! Either to suffer, or to die! Still more suffering! Yes, to suffer always! O my Lord, I beseech you, do not deprive me of the happiness of suffering for you."

APPLICATION.

In imitation of the saints, let us look on the heart of Jesus as the secure refuge of all who are in want or

suffering. Let us have recourse to it in all circumstances, but particularly, in times of trial.

Are we in a state of spiritual dryness, in that state of ennui and want of relish when every exercise of piety is painful, and the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ seems heavy and crushing. Let us confess that we have deserved to be deprived of every heavenly grace, of all the unction of grace ; but let us remember that the heart of Jesus is the source of consolation, and that it is said to those who have recourse to it: " You shall draw waters with joy out of the Savior's fountain."*

Are we assailed by temptations, let us remember that the heart of Jesus is a fortress inaccessible to the enemies of our salvation, an asylum whence we can defy them, an arsenal of all the most powerful weapons against them. Let us have recourse then, to that heart saying to it: " O Sacred Heart, strength and support of weak souls, do not abandon me in the situation to which I am reduced. Come to my help ; make haste to succor me ; guard my heart which is yours by so many titles, and which I consecrate anew to you, to belong to you forever."

Do we find difficulties in succeeding in the employment in which obedience has placed us ? Let us ask of the divine heart grace to triumph over them. Let us beseech it to fill with its divine influence, the hearts confided to us, to dispose them to hear our instructions with docility and good will, and to bless us in all we undertake for his glory and the salvation of souls.

* Isa., xii. 3.

Let us have recourse to him with the same confidence in our sickness, for he is the health of the sick; let us have recourse to him above all when it shall have come and it will be said to us: "Depart from this world, Christian soul." Let us there fix our dying eyes on the wound in the side of our crucified God, let us contemplate that heart, opened by the spear, and ask, by the blood and water which he shed, that our soul, entirely purified, may be admitted, when it leaves the body, to the temple of divine love, there to celebrate forever the infinite goodness of the God of love, who became our redemption and salvation.

PRAYER.

"It is from the profound abyss of my own nothingness that I prostrate myself before thee, O most Sacred and divine Heart of Jesus, to render thee all the homage of adoration, love, and praise, of which I am capable; and, disclosing to thee, as to my greatest friend, my miseries, my poverty, my tepidity, all the wounds and ulcers of my soul, I beseech thee to have pity on me and succor me according to the greatness of thy mercy. O heart of love! I have placed all my confidence in thee, save me, O heart of love! be my refuge at all times, but especially, at the hour of my death. Amen."*

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 379.)

* Blessed Margaret Mary..

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

OUR DUTIES TOWARDS THE SACRED HEART.

"To the Lamb, benediction, and honor, and glory, and power,
for ever and ever."—Apoc., v. 13.

CONSIDERATION.

The heart of Jesus is that in which all perfections, all virtues meet: it possesses the fulness of the riches of grace and glory. It is a heart truly divine because of its hypostatic union with the word, and which merits all the adoration of angels and men; therefore, every soul ought to pay him a homage of perfect dependence, annihilate itself before him, celebrate his greatness, and say, by its dispositions and acts: "Benediction, and honor, and glory, and power, for ever and ever" to the Sacred Heart, which alone is the worthy sanctuary of God, thrice holy, and by whose love fallen humanity has been raised up and saved.

Let us offer to the Sacred Heart, with joy, the tribute of our adorations in union with those paid to it in heaven by the Most Holy Virgin, the angels and saints: and on earth by so many faithful souls who place all their happiness in giving it glory; let us consecrate to

it our mind, our heart, our body, all that we have, and all that we are ; let us venerate its images ; let us proclaim its excellence and its prerogatives ; let us embrace eagerly the devotion of which it is the object.

Let us be apostles of the worship of love and adoration which the Church pays to it ; let us neglect nothing in our power, to make it known, adored, loved, and served, by the souls confided to our care ; let us lead them by our words, and still more, by our example to devote themselves entirely to it.

Let us study and meditate on its amiable perfections, particularly its love for us, a love most tender, most beneficent, most vigorous, most generous ; a love infinitely greater than that of the most loving of mothers for the best of sons ; a love which could not be satisfied but by sacrificing himself for our salvation ; a love which gives him every right to all our affections.

Let us truly love that divine heart, and exclaim with St. Liguori : "O adorable heart, O sovereign beauty, O infinite goodness, I acknowledge that you are the most deserving object of our love ; I wish to love you as far as you deserve, or at least as far as a pious soul can love you. O heart infinitely amiable, wound my heart with your love, bind it in your sweet chains, unite it so to you that it may be wholly in you. Love of my Jesus, banish from my heart every other love."

Our Lord speaking to the Blessed Margaret Mary said to her : "Be attentive only to love me, and consequently, only to please me on every occasion, and in everything ; let my love be the object and end of all

your thoughts, all your actions, all your desires ; breathe only for my love, nor strive to love me, but for the purpose of loving me more." But does he not address these same words to us, to us who have consecrated our lives to him ?

Let us love him, then, as that holy sister loved him ; that is to say, with a sincere, cordial, constant, zealous, and courageous, love ; with a love that can refuse nothing, that gives everything with pleasure, and that places its happiness in sacrifice.

"O men," exclaims Père Crasset, treating on this subject, "Jesus wishes you to love him. It is impossible that your heart should not be given to some one, since it cannot live without loving, nor love without giving itself. Now if your heart is to be given away, who has a better right to possess it than he who made it ? The world asks your heart to turn it into a hell ; the heart of Jesus asks it to make a paradise in it, even while on earth : choose between them."

But our choice is made, O divine heart ; our heart is yours without division and without recall ; it asks of you the grace only to burn more and more with the fire of your love.

The heart of Jesus is inflamed with love for men, and has been lavish of its gifts towards them : and yet most have only coldness and indifference towards him, and many offend him in his sacrament by their irreverences, and even by sacrileges ! Oh what a subject of pain to him ! And what a motive for us to do all in our power to be a consolation to him, to atone

for all the failings and outrages of men towards him, and especially for those of which we have been guilty !

Let us remember with what graces he has favored us, us above all who have so many times experienced the effects of his liberality, and let us testify our gratitude to him by repeating with the Church ; “ O my soul, bless the Lord, and do not forget his favors.” *

Let us make our gratitude unlimited ; let us thank the divine heart not only for what we owe to it personally, but also for all the favors it has granted to those dear to us, or with whom we are in relation. Let us thank it for the care of his providence over the Church, the Institute, and our families ; let us thank him, especially, for the institution of the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist, the most signal of his gifts ; let us, from time to time, offer up our communions for that purpose, remembering that the best means of proving our gratitude for that gift of his love, is, to partake of it with the dispositions that secure its fruits.

“ The foundation, the essence of all true devotion,” says St. Augustine, “ is the imitation of that which is its object ; ” every soul devout to the Sacred Heart studies to resemble it. In meditation it fixes its eyes on this adorable model, and, after having besought his grace, endeavors to reproduce his divine characters, to have the same sentiments and the same wishes. It is attentive to his lessons of charity, sweetness, humility, patience, &c., and puts them faithfully in practice. Not

* Office of the Sacred Heart.

only does it obey what he commands, but, if we may say so, it goes beyond his designs regarding it.

Knowing how much he desires to do us good, it invokes him with the most entire confidence in all circumstances, and especially, in adversities and temptations. It is to the Sacred Heart it has recourse, or rather, it is in it that it takes up its abode, as in an impregnable asylum, where it can defy all the powers of hell.

It has the closest and most constant union with it, and consequently, its good works are singularly pleasing to the heavenly Father, and meritorious for heaven.

APPLICATION.

Let us often call to mind our duties towards the Sacred Heart, and the motives we have for observing them. Let us examine, if we in truth observe them with the fidelity and affection he requires.

Perhaps our acts show that we are not really devout to the Sacred Heart. If such be the case, let us make haste to reform our conduct. Let us ask the help of grace for that purpose; and henceforth let us study to render to the Sacred Heart the worship of adoration, love, reparation, gratitude, imitation, and prayer, which we owe it.

Let us unite our homages with those of the immaculate heart of Mary who adores, loves, and thanks the divine heart in the most excellent manner.

Let us unite with the angels who give it glory in heaven and in the most holy Sacrament of the altar,

where they burn with love in his presence. Let us unite with all those holy souls who seem to have had no thought, will, or affection, but for that treasury of graces, that furnace of love, that abyss of goodness, clemency, and mercy ; and who, enriched by its graces here below, now enjoy their fulness in the home of eternal love.

PRAYER.

O heart of Jesus, sublime teacher, who givest me to understand what are my duties towards thee, deign, I beseech thee, to grant me grace to fulfil them all exactly, so that glorifying thee on earth as so many holy souls have done who now enjoy thee in heaven, I may become worthy to share in thy goodness ; and to celebrate through eternity thy greatness and infinite mercy.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 379.)

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

THE BLESSED MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE.

"The Lord possessed me in the beginning."—Prov., viii. 22.

CONSIDERATION.

THE Blessed Margaret Mary was one of those chosen souls regarding whom the Lord had great designs, and who, by their fidelity to grace, their good will, and their courage, show themselves worthy of the choice made of them. That holy religious was a model of all virtues, among which shone, with the greatest brightness, love for Jesus, and zeal for the establishment of the worship of his Sacred Heart.

Who can imagine how she loved our Lord, what were the transports of her heart towards that divine spouse, whose amiable perfections she knew, by what bond of affection she was united to him, and what she accomplished from the purest love. ?

She loved Jesus with an active, ardent, strong, generous, love, which did not cease to increase, which was the main spring of her conduct, which made her advance with great steps on the path of sanctity ; and attain in a short time to the height of perfection.

She loved him with a courageous and heroic love, wishing here only his cross in which she placed her happiness. It is true that her Beloved brought her often to Mount Thabor, by disclosing to her, and making her taste the sweetest consolations; but he oftener brought her to Calvary, giving her to understand that love was proved by sacrifice.

Oh! how she understood that sublime lesson! She looked on occasions of suffering as pledges of the love of Jesus, who wished her, by their means, to become more and more the possessor of his heart. "No, no," she exclaimed "nothing can please me in this world but the cross of my divine Master, a cross, heavy, ignominious, and without consolation or pleasure, but that of having none." Like St. Theresa, she loved life because of its sufferings. According to her own words, she experienced so great a contentment in being on the cross, that all-ardent as was her desire to see God, it seemed that the desire of suffering was still greater.

Her love for Jesus inspired her with the purest, the most active zeal to make the adorable heart of our divine Savior known, honored, loved, served, imitated, and invoked; and thus fulfil the providential mission with which she had been intrusted. That was the end she did not cease to follow. "No," said she, "I could not be employed about anything but the Sacred Heart of my Jesus, and I shall die content if I have been able to procure it some honor. . . . Provided he is loved, and reigns, I have nothing more to wish for. . . . There is nothing I would not wish to do or suffer, to make him

reign over all hearts. . . . All my joy is that he is known, loved, and honored."

But let us hear the Church herself teach us in the decree of the Beatification of Margaret Mary, what were the feelings of his holy and worthy daughter of St. Francis of Sales, on this and on other points of her admirable life.

"Jesus Christ," says the decree referred to, "in order to increase the fire of love, has willed that the veneration and worship of his Sacred Heart should be established and propagated in the Church. It was to establish that pious practice, at once so salutary and lawful, and to spread it over the world, that our Lord deigned to choose Margaret Mary, a religious of the order of the Visitation, who by the innocence of her life and the continual exercise of all virtues, showed herself, with the help of God's grace, worthy of so exalted a ministry.

She manifested from her infancy a virtue above her age. Later on she avoided company, and made it her delight to frequent the church, and to pass long hours in prayer. . . . Being admitted at the age of nine to the Eucharistic banquet, she drew from that heavenly food a charity so ardent, that that divine fire seemed to issue from her lips and her eyes.

Inflamed also with charity for her neighbor, she deplored bitterly the misery of a multitude of children who, almost abandoned by their parents, grew up in vice as well as in ignorance of the things most necessary for salvation; she patiently taught them the mysteries of faith, and trained them up to virtue.

When admitted to the convent about the age of thirty-three, she showed herself, during her novitiate, such as her dispositions for virtue and the innocence of her life gave reason to expect, and she was permitted to take her solemn vows.

After that, she was seen to advance rapidly in religious perfection, offering to her companions, consecrated like her to God, a shining model of all virtues. There was seen to shine in her a marvellous humility, an extraordinary promptitude to obey, and admirable patience in supporting all kinds of contradiction, an extreme carefulness to observe even the smallest rules, an austerity that led her constantly to punish her flesh, an indefatigable eagerness for prayer, to which she gave herself up day and night, and in which her soul, detached from sensible things, was often inundated with heavenly gifts.

Whilst meditating on the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, she was penetrated with the most lively sorrow, and inflamed with the fire of divine love.

One day that she prayed with more fervor than ordinary, in presence of the Blessed Sacrament, our Lord made known to her that it would be most pleasing to him to see the worship of his Sacred Heart established, and that he wished to intrust that mission to her. Humble as she was, she was terrified, thinking herself unworthy of so high a ministry; however, to obey the will of heaven, and to satisfy the desire she had of enkindling in the hearts of men the fire of divine love, she did all that was in her power to cause the

Sacred Heart to receive from them every kind of honor and adoration.

Finally, desiring to burst her chains to join the nuptials of the divine Lamb, for which she sighed so ardently, she died at the age of forty-three—less from sickness than from the divine love that consumed her.

APPLICATION.

With the Church, let us thank our Lord for the favors with which he enriched his holy handmaid, and in which we, along with all the faithful devout to the Sacred Heart, can have so considerable a share.

Let us honor that holy religious who was the beloved of the Sovereign King, who practiced, with so much courage, the sublimest virtues; whom so many of the faithful venerated during life and after death, and whose images the Church has just placed over our altars.

Let us address our prayers to her with confidence. Ah! if while she was upon earth, she had so much power over the heart of Jesus, how much more has she now that she is in heaven, and that her soul is immersed in that ocean of all treasures!

Let us ask, through her intercession, the grace of walking in her footsteps, of responding faithfully to all the designs of God upon us, of loving Jesus Christ as she loved him, and of being, from the motive of that love, fervent religious; regular, humble, obedient, charitable, zealous, patient, and true imitators of our crucified

Lord, receiving contradiction as precious opportunities of proving our love for him.

Following the example of Margaret Mary, let us be zealous to propagate and revive devotion to the Sacred Heart. What could be nobler or more worthy of our efforts than to spread the spirit and practice of that worship of love and reparation, so pleasing to our Lord, so calculated to inflame souls with the fire of the purest charity, so efficacious in drawing down upon earth the most numerous and most precious blessings of heaven!

PRAYER.

O Blessed Margaret Mary, chaste spouse of the Sovereign King, who didst receive the communications of his heart inflamed with love for us, and according to his designs, hadst no thought, desire, no will, but for the establishment and propagation of devotion to that divine heart, accept the homage of veneration which we pay thee, with the whole church; and deign to intercede for us, so as to obtain for us the grace of imitating thy example, of being the apostles of the worship of love, and of living like thee, for Jesus alone, and of thus meriting to go and possess him with thee in heaven. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 380.)

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

"Jesus Christ loved me."—Gal., ii. 20.

CONSIDERATION.

LET us consider the feast of the Sacred Heart in its institution and its object, and let us understand how dear it ought to be to every truly Christian soul.

One day, within the Octave of Corpus Christi, while a holy nun, whom God had chosen and prepared for this sublime ministry, was prostrate before the most holy Sacrament, our divine Master appeared sensibly to her, and discovering his heart to her, all glowing with flames of love, he said to her: "Behold this heart which has loved men and which has spared nothing to testify its love for them, going so far as to spend itself and die for them; and yet, it receives in return from the greatest number, only ingratitude; for they do not cease to outrage me by their irreverence and sacrileges, by the coldness and neglect they have for me in the sacrament of my love. . . . But that which is most painful to me is, that there are hearts consecrated to me who so treat me."

“On that account, I ask of you that the first Friday after the Octave of the holy Sacrament be dedicated by a special feast to honor my heart, communicating on that day and making reparation to it, so as to repair the indignities offered to it while it has been exposed upon the altars. I promise thee that my heart will expand to pour forth in abundance the influence of its divine love upon those who will pay me that honor, or procure that it be paid to me.”

Soon the design of our adorable Savior received its fulfilment, and now the feast of his heart is universal in the Church.

Let us celebrate it with joy, piety, and willingness ; and render to the divine heart the worship of honor, love, gratitude, and reparation, which he requires of us, and which is the spirit of that solemnity.

The heart of Jesus is the heart of God, because it is united hypostatically to the Word ; it is the temple of the most holy Trinity, the worthy object of the adorations of heaven and earth, the assemblage of all perfections, the ocean of all the treasures of grace, an infinite abyss of goodness, mercy, and love. Therefore, let us adore it with the most profound respect, and in union with all the holy angels who prostrate themselves before it, in the home of his glory and in the sanctuaries where he resides under the sacramental veils.

Let us extol with transports of admiration and gratitude, the sentiments with which it is animated, and especially its love for us.

Let us reflect on what this love was, and by what

acts it has shown itself. Let us say to ourselves, "Jesus Christ loved me and has delivered himself for me;" I had no existence and already he loved me; he loved me in spite of my misery, my poverty, my nothingness; he loved me even when I was his enemy he loved me more than his blood and his life which he so generously sacrificed for me.

What a mystery of goodness! Ah, who can think of it without being filled with astonishment, and exclaiming with a pious author: * "My body, O Jesus, is only a mass of dust, my soul is the tomb of your favors, my heart is nothing but ingratitude; my understanding, nothing but darkness. Ah! how then can you love me, you my God, my all.

Yes, the heart of Jesus loves us with an infinite love; everything proclaims it, but above all his numberless favors. Let us recall to mind that for our salvation the Word of God humbled himself so as to assume our nature, to embrace a life of labor, privation, and sufferings; to drink the bitter chalice to the dregs, and to die a most cruel and ignominious death. Let us reflect that it was for us he founded his Church, and instituted the sacraments, which are its riches and life. Let us think, above all, on that which is so justly called the Sacrament of love, where there still burns with the fire of charity, that same heart that so loved us in Mary's womb, in the Crib at Bethlehem, in the chamber of the last supper, and on Calvary.

Let us thank him for that ineffable gift of his love,

* Père Nouet.

by which he dwells with us, sacrifices himself for us, becomes the food of our souls, enlightens us, consoles us, strengthens us, transforms us into himself, and in some sense, makes us divine. Let us thank him for all the care of his providence for our Institute, our families and ourselves personally, whom he has favored with so many graces. Let us acknowledge that we have received all from his generosity, that his liberality is infinite, that it is goodness itself, and that his mercy is eternal.

To our homages of love and gratitude, let us join that of reparation, deplored our coldness, our want of reverence to him, and begging forgiveness; lamenting the small return that his love receives from men, striving to compensate, by our adorations, for all the offences offered to him in the holy Eucharist, and which so deeply afflict his divine heart.

Let us unite in reparation, with Mary, who on Calvary offered to her Crucified Son all the affections of her maternal heart, to make amends for the insults with which he was overwhelmed. Let us present to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the sentiments of love, adoration, and gratitude, of that glorious Virgin; and let us beseech him, in consideration of them, to forget our ingratitude. Let us offer him the homage paid him by the angels who surround his altar, and that also of the pious souls who, on this day, come in a spirit of love and penance to the foot of the tabernacle.

Let us say to him: O love ignored by so great a multitude of the human race, and even by many of those

consecrated to thee, behold us in thy presence to bewail all our offences, and to present thee in reparation the sentiments with which the immaculate heart of thy most holy Mother honors thee. . . . Oh deign, we beseech thee to forget our offences, to remember only thy mercy. Pardon, O Lord pardon your people, and be not always angry with them. May the homages, we offer thee, console thy divine heart, and merit for us, according to thy promise, that that heart expand to pour upon us the influence of its divine love.

APPLICATION.

Let us pass this day in a spirit of adoration, love, and reparation, towards the heart of Jesus.

Let us propose to ourselves that intention while assisting at the holy sacrifice of the altar, where the divine heart is again offered up for us, and opens, as on the cross, to pour forth the blood and water that are our salvation. Let us propose it to ourselves whilst communicating which is the principal act enjoined by our Lord. Let us propose it to ourselves in our visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and say with St. Liguori: "O most loving heart of my Jesus, from which have come all the sacraments, but especially the sacrament of love, I would wish to pay you as much honor as you there offer to your heavenly Father. You are there on the altar where you love me with the same love that made you sacrifice your life for me on the cross. Be forever blessed, O divine heart, and deign to enlighten those who know you not. O most pure heart, purify my

heart from all attachment to creatures, and fill it with thy holy love. Grant that I may live henceforth only to obey thee, love thee, and please thee."

Yes, let us address ourselves to the heart of Jesus, and invoke it with the most entire confidence for ourselves, our relations, our Brothers, and our pupils; recommending the interests of our soul to it, begging it to be our defence, our asylum, our consolation, in this life, so that it may be our abode and our joy through eternity.

PRAYER.

O heart of Jesus, plenitude of all riches, abyss of goodness, love, and mercy, accept the homage of adoration, love, thanksgiving, and expiation, which we offer thee this day, and deign to hear our prayer.

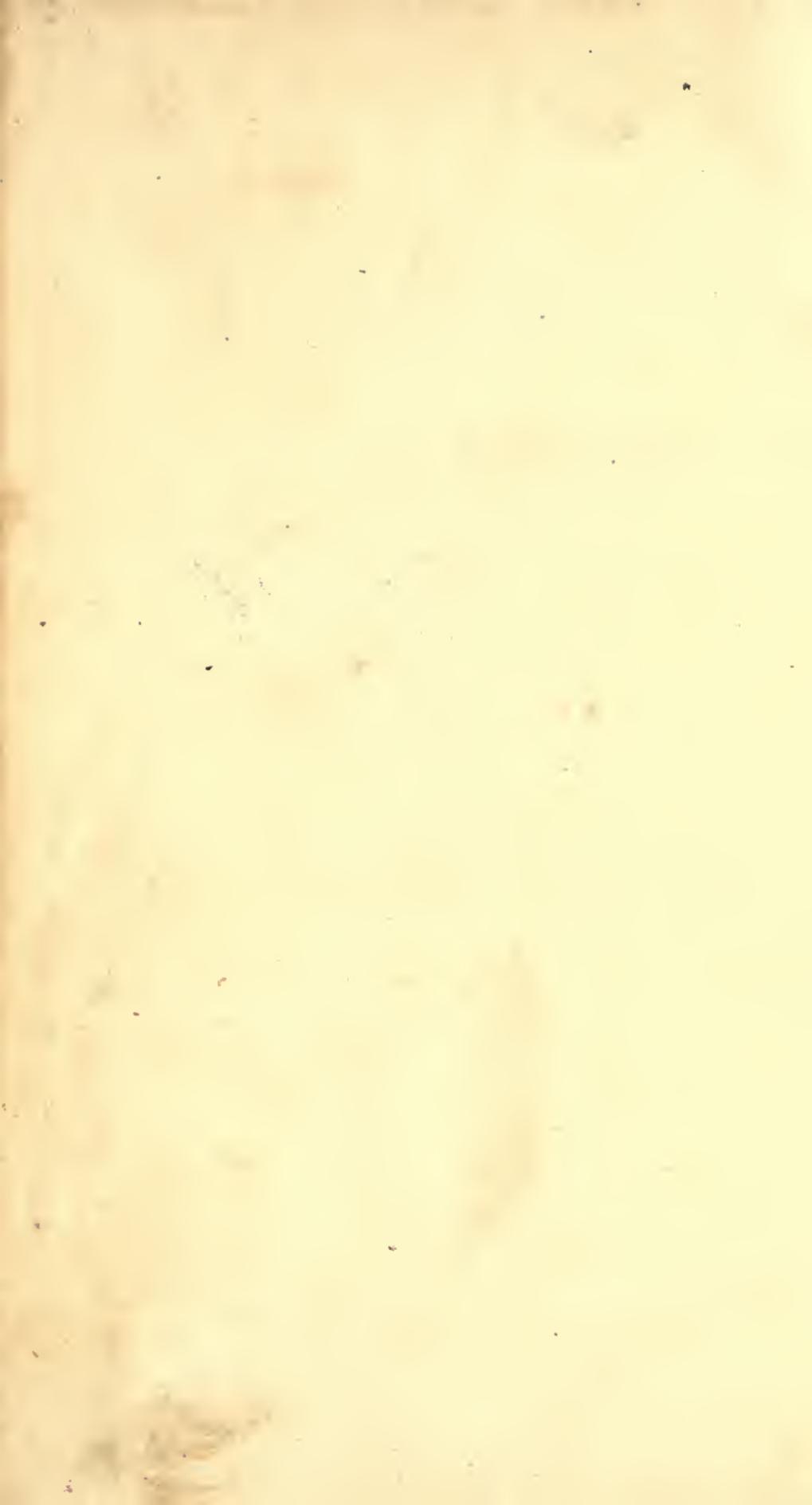
Pardon us the offences by which we have so many times and so deeply afflicted thee; grant that we may always be to thee a true consolation by our piety, our regularity, and our fervor, that we may advance, more and more, and without ceasing, in the path of thy divine love, until we go to be immersed in thee in the home of never-ending love. Amen.

(See RÉSUMÉS, page 381.)

THE END.







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